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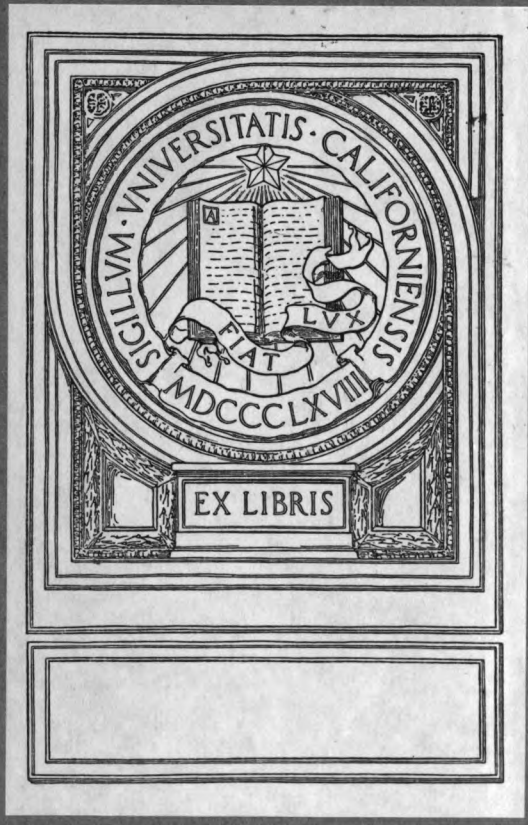

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MODERN AMERICAN WRITERS

THE WOMEN WHO MAKE OUR NOVELS

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The Women Who Make Our Novels

BY

GRANT M. OVERTON

NEW YORK
MOFFAT, YARD & COMPANY
1918

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INTRODUCTION

THIS book, the rather unpremeditated production of several months' work, is by a man who is not a novelist and who is therefore entirely unfitted to write about women who are novelists. Several excuses may be urged; the author is, by general agreement, young. He has to do with many novels, being, indeed, a sort of new and strange creature, a literary reporter self-styled, a person connected with a newspaper and charged with the task of describing new books for the readers thereof. As he could make no critical pretensions he had to fall back upon a process peculiar to newspaper work, the attempt at a simple putting before the public of facts, of things lately said and done—in short, of news. He had to regard a new book as a piece of news to be communicated as honestly and as entertainingly as any other occurrence. And so, here. He has tried to be a good reporter of the personalities, performances and methods of work of some of the best known American women novelists.

An effort has been made to include in this book all the living American women novelists whose writing, by the customary standards, is artistically fine. An equal effort has been made to include all the living American women novelists whose writing has attained a wide popularity. The author does not

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contend, nor will he so much as allow, that the production of writing artistically fine is a greater achievement than the satisfaction of many thousands of readers. It may be more lasting; it is not more meritorious; and to attempt to institute comparisons between the two things is absurd. The critic may be justified in treating of Edith Wharton and ignoring Gene Stratton-Porter. The literary reporter who should do such a thing doesn't know his job.

It is, therefore, to be feared that this is no book for highbrows. But a lower forehead and a broader outlook have their advantages. In the striking popularity of a particular storyteller a thoughtful observer may see important and significant evidences of the tendencies of his time. And that may be much more worth his while than the most careful speculation as to who will be read fifty years from now.

The order in which authors are taken up in the book is accidental and therefore meaningless. The reader is recommended to follow his own inclination in perusing the chapters. They are entirely detached from each other, as are the subjects considered except for an occasional reference, in discussing one, to another's work. These references, and in fact all the discussions of various books, are to be taken as expository and not critical. If a thing is stated to be good, bad or indifferent the statement is made as a statement of fact and not of personal opinion.

The justification of this book is the need of it. It is ridiculous that there should be nothing easily accessible about such writers as Edith Wharton, Ellen Glasgow, Kathleen Norris, Mary Johnston, Mary S.

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Watts, Anna Katharine Green, Clara Louise Burnham, Amelia E. Barr and Edna Ferber. The condensations of *Who's Who in America* are dry bones; books on living American writers are all "studies" or compilations of a highly selective sort; their authors want to be revered by posterity as persons of wonderful critical perception and judgment. The authors themselves have not the time to satisfy their readers' curiosity and their publishers hesitate lest they may not remain their publishers!

And so the literary reporter steps in. Some of the chapters in this book, generally condensed in content, have appeared in the columns of *Books and the Book World,* the literary magazine of *The Sun,* New York, of which he is the editor. In their preparation he has been wonderfully helped by the authors themselves and by other individuals and publishing houses, for which he makes acknowledgment and returns his thanks in a note elsewhere in the book.

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My indebtedness to various persons and sources is repeatedly made manifest in the text. Only the co-operation of publishers has made possible the preparation of these sketches in a short time. I wish particularly to thank the following for important help:

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The Century Company for material on Alice Hegan Rice, Alice Duer Miller and Eleanor Hallowell Abbott.

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THE WOMEN WHO MAKE OUR NOVELS

CHAPTER I

EDITH WHARTON

THE order of authors in this book is accidental and the circumstance that the first chapter of the book is upon Edith Wharton is also accidental, also and therefore; which is to say that it is not accidental at all. For if there is any lesson which life teaches us it is the existence of an order, a plan, in unsuspected places. To say, therefore, that a thing is accidental is to pay it the most glorious compliment. It is to say that it is ordered or ordained, decreed, immutably fixed upon from the Beginning—not of a book but of a Universe. There is about anything accidental something absolutely divine. To dart off at a tangent (for a mere moment) there was this much in the divine right of kings—an accident at the beginning of it. Had the kings contented themselves with this accidental character, had they preserved the spontaneity that surrounded the first of their crowd, there would be more of them left! But such reflections and the working out of them, a

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pleasurable kind of intellectual counterpoint, may be left to Gilbert Keith Chesterton.

We are concerned wholly with the women who make our novels and, by the accident of title if you like, more with the women than with their novels. The two are no more perfectly separable than milk and cream and very often the best thing to do is not to try to separate them, but rather to stir them up together. As the only excuses for a book—other than a work of fiction—are either that it presents facts or suggests ideas, we shall try to talk rather simply (much more simply than in our first paragraph of this chapter) about American women novelists and their books—simply and honestly. If we say little about "literature" it is because what is usually described as literature is nothing better than a pale reflection of life.

Edith Wharton comes first in this book that she may the better stand alone. She has always stood alone. The distinguishing thing about her is the distinguishing thing about her work—aloneness, which is not the same thing as aloofness. She is not aloof. At 56 she is working in France, doing that which her hand finds to do. Her aloneness arises from the facts of her life. Never were so many favoring stars clustered together as for her when she was born. She had everything.

She was born in New York (item 1) in 1862, Edith Newbold Jones, the daughter of Frederic Jones and Lucretia Stevens Rhinelander Jones (item 2). She was educated at home (item 3) and was married to Edward Wharton of Boston in 1885 (item 4—no! countless items of luck had already intervened!). In other

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words, Mrs. Wharton, granddaughter of General Ebenezer Stevens of Revolutionary fame, came of distinguished family, was the child of extremely well-to-do parents, had every advantage that careful instruction, generous travel and cultivated surroundings could confer upon her. Much of her life has been spent in Italy; a perfect acquaintance with great painting and architecture, everywhere so discernible in her work, has always with her been the customary thing. Private tutors in America and abroad spared her the leveling processes of forty lines of Virgil a day and ten mathematical sums each night. They touched her as a sculptor touches his clay, firmly and caressingly and only to bring out her peculiar excellences, only to help her native genius to expression. Think of it—Italy and all the other rich backgrounds, means, social position, fine traditions, the right surroundings, the right mentors, the right tastes and a considerable gift to begin with! What a mold! It is exquisite, perhaps unmatched in the instance of any other novelist. It is what we dream of for genius and it is what genius would smash to fragments! The very fact that Mrs. Wharton *had* a mold is the best evidence that she is not a genius in the most discriminating sense of a most indiscriminately used word.

She is not a genius but she moves and always has moved in a world of geniuses. From childhood she had, of course, an easy familiarity with French, German and Italian. The ordinary bounds upon reading—the only way of keeping the company of the supremely great of earth—were thus swept a meas-

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ureless distance away. French, German and Italian as well as English literature were accessible to her—and the French includes the Russian, of course. She read widely and we are told that "when she came upon Goethe she was more prepared than the average to take to heart his counsels of perfection and reach after a high and effective culture!" Reach? Not upward, surely; there was nothing above her. Outward, perhaps. At any rate, here was Mrs. Wharton in the actual presence and company of a genius if ever there lived one. It is agonizing to think what Goethe would have said were he alive these days. He would have said the supremely scathing thing, the thing that would have withered forever the moral cancer of his countrymen, and we cannot articulate it. A magical mind and a magical tongue and a magical pen—Goethe. He was always saying sesame. We, who have not his genius, have to batter down the barred door.

It is to Goethe above all other literary influence that Mrs. Wharton feels indebted. Strike out the word "literary." The influence of Goethe is not a literary influence, but an influence proceeding directly from the heart of life itself. What sort of an influence is it? High, pure, clean and yet human. Intangible, too; about all you really can say of it is that it is like the company of some people who bring out all the best that is in you. They do not put into you anything new. They draw you out, or rather, they draw something out of you. At the risk of shocking the fastidious reader and to the joy of the literally-minded we may say that they are the spiritual equiva-

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lent of the mustard plaster. They have an equal drawing power and efficacy, but they do not draw out the ache but the great glow and spirit which are the incontestable proof of the existence in the human soul of something immortal.

Mrs. Wharton read widely, as we say, and she read in the main "standard" fiction. Her taste is for George Eliot and the ethical teachings of that earlier woman novelist. Her taste is equally for Gustave Flaubert, the "craftsman's master," the writer who teaches writers how to write. You learn the innermost secrets of your writing craft from Flaubert and then you put aside everything you have learned from the master and learn from life. Balzac, Thackeray, Dickens and Meredith have been Mrs. Wharton's steady diet; she has re-read them so often as repeatedly and contentedly to fall into arrears with respect to current fiction. She has had always a great interest in biology and in whatever touches upon the history of human thought. This, in brief, is the substance of Edith Wharton the woman and the background of Edith Wharton the novelist.

We shall not discuss Mrs. Wharton's books in detail in this chapter and book for the best of reasons—they leave no room for two opinions of her work. Of almost no other novelist whom we shall consider would it be possible to say this; indeed of some American women novelists there are nearer twenty-two than two opinions. Some writers, like Gertrude Atherton, are subjects of perpetual controversy; others are the cause of wide but sharply defined cleavages of opinion —Gene Stratton-Porter, for example. The work of

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still others is more properly matter for speculation as to what they may do than estimate of what they have done. But Mrs. Wharton falls in none of these classifications. There is only one opinion about her work: it is excellent but lifeless; it is Greek marble with no Pygmalion near. From this sweeping verdict three—and only three—of her books are to be excepted. They are *Ethan Frome* and *The House of Mirth* and *Summer*. In these three books you can feel the pulse beat. In *Ethan Frome* the pulse is the feeble quiver of the crushed and dying human heart; in *The House of Mirth* there is the slow throb of human suffering and anguish, mental no less than spiritual; in *Summer* there is the excited and accelerated vibration of human passion.

It will be taken as a very dogmatic piece of business on our part when we say that her work leaves no room for two opinions. Was there ever a bit of writing, some will ask, which could not give birth in the minds of readers to more than one opinion? Often, indeed, twin opinions are born to the same reader!

We must answer that here and hereafter we are dealing with easily ascertainable facts and not indulging in criticism. Mrs. Wharton's work leaves room for only one opinion simply because those who might form another opinion do not read her. And those who do not read her take their opinions from those who do and then, following the instinct of our natures, declare (quite honestly) the borrowed opinion as their own. Our real audacity consists in the assertion, implied in what we have said, that of

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all the thousands who read Mrs. Wharton not one believes in his heart for one solitary instant that the mass of her fiction is alive. They look upon her work as they look upon the Winged Victory; it is ravishingly beautiful, it has perfection of form, it has every attribute of beauty possible of attainment by the consummate artist, but it has also the severe limitations of any form of art.

We must pause here a moment to be emphatic. Art is not life and never can be. Life is not art and never can be. This is just as true of writing as of painting or sculpture. All art is necessarily dead. All art is necessarily a *representation* of life or some aspect of it. The moment a person begins to paint or to model or to write and allow himself to think of any kind of *art* in what he is doing, he goes into a fourth dimension—and life exists in only three dimensions. This is not to say that art is undesirable; it is highly desirable, is, in fact, almost as necessary to our souls as a fourth dimension is to the mathematician. The fourth dimension is a spiritual necessity to the mathematician; it is the future life in the terms of his trade.

And so, if a writer would keep life in what he writes, he must not think of art at all. He must not have any of the artist's special preoccupations. He must go at his writing just as he would go at living. If he could keep self-consciousness of what he is doing or trying to do entirely out of his work he would succeed completely. And succeed completely he never does. How nearly he can come to complete success we know from some of Kipling, O. Henry, most of

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Conrad, one book of Thomas Hardy's—we name a few modern writers just for the sake of specific illustration and illustration instantly familiar to any reader of this book.

Mrs. Wharton is sometimes spoken of as a pupil of Henry James, and the resemblance is strong in some of her work to that of James, but she is not his pupil. It is simply a case of the similar products of largely similar inheritances and environment. Both these writers were from birth well-to-do, both had exceptional education and lived and moved in cultivated surroundings. Their endowments were not unlike though more disparate than their circumstances. James had a greater gift and ruined it more completely. *The Portrait of a Lady* is the everlasting witness of what he might have done by the fact of what, in that superb novel, he did do. *Ethan Frome, The House of Mirth* and *Summer* are all inferior to *The Portrait of a Lady* and all superior to James's later work.

If any one tells you otherwise it is because he is thinking in terms of art and not in terms of life. And some will tell you otherwise, for the world never has lacked those to whom art was more than life just as the world has never lacked those to whom a future life was more than the life of this earth. With these we have no quarrel; we can but respect them; God made them so. It takes all kinds of people, we agree, to make a world; if that is so, manifestly it takes all kinds of views to get the true view. In any triangle the sum of all three angles is equal to two right angles. If, therefore, one of the angles

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of the triangle is a right angle, the sum of the other two will equal a right angle. The angle of outlook which sees only the artistry in a piece of literary work added to the angle of outlook which sees only the livingness in the same work may make the right angle which we all aspire to look from.

BOOKS BY EDITH WHARTON

The Greater Inclination, 1899.
The Touchstone, 1900.
Crucial Instances, 1901.
The Valley of Decision, 1902.
Sanctuary, 1903.
The Descent of Man, and Other Stories, 1904.
Italian Villas and Their Gardens, 1904.
Italian Backgrounds, 1905.
The House of Mirth, 1905.
Madame de Treymes, 1907.
The Fruit of the Tree, 1907.
The Hermit and the Wild Woman, 1908.
A Motor-Flight Through France, 1908.
Artemis to Actæon and Other Verse, 1909.
Tales of Men and Ghosts, 1910.
The Reef, 1912.
The Custom of the Country, 1913.
The Book of the Homeless, 1915.
Fighting France, 1915.
Ethan Frome.
The Decoration of Houses.
The Joy of Living.

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Xingu and Other Stories.
Summer.

Published by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York; Summer is published by D. Appleton & Company, New York.

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CHAPTER II

ALICE BROWN

FROM New Hampshire Alice Brown responded, July 29, 1918, to a request for something from herself about herself with a letter as follows:

"I have been too busy in legitimate ways—gardening, cooking, cursing the Hun—to write you a human document. But these are some of the dark facts. I was born in Hampton Falls, New Hampshire, about six miles inland from the sea, near enough to get a tang of salt and a 'sea turn' of walking—[a word that looks like 'mist' or 'twist'.] The country there is slightly rolling, with hills enough to give nice little dips and climbs in the winding roads, and the farms are fertile. My people were farmers. We lived, not at Hampton Falls village, but in a little 'neighborhood' on the road to Exeter, and at Exeter all the shopping was done. It was one postoffice, and any neighbor who drove over brought back the mail for the rest.

"I went to the little district school until I was perhaps fourteen and then went to the 'Robinson Female Seminary,' Exeter, walking back and forth every day except in the winter months, and there I was graduated—after which I taught several years, in the country and in Boston, hating it more and more every

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minute, and then threw over my certainty to write.

"I did a little work on the *Christian Register* and then went to the *Youth's Companion,* where, for years, I ground out stuff from the latest books and magazines.

"And that's really all! I own a farm here at Hill, which I don't carry on—sell the grass standing and the apples on the trees. I love gardens and houses. I wish I could go round planning the resurrection of old houses and pass them over to somebody else and plan more.

"And *that's* all! Now I ask you if any newspaper gent, even with a genius for embroidery, could make anything of that? 'Story? God bless you, sir, I've none to tell!'

"Gloomily yours,

"ALICE BROWN."

[In pencil]

"I thought I should write about five thousand words, but this is how it pans out!"

And it pans out extremely well, if a newspaper gent with no genius for embroidery, incapable, indeed, of knitting a single sock for a soldier, may express his satisfaction. For a woman of sixty who has no story of her own to tell has certainly a lot of stories to tell of other people. Miss Brown has told them all. A very respectable list of writings will be found at the close of this chapter.

New England stories (*Meadow-Grass*), English travels (*By Oak and Thorn*), poems (*The Road to Castaly*), a study of Stevenson written in collaboration, stories for girls (as *The Secret of the Clan*), a

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play that, among nearly 1,700 submitted, won a $10,000 prize (*Children of Earth*) and a number of novels of which *The Prisoner* is the most notable, are a main outline of her contribution to American literature.

She is without any question one of the half dozen best short story writers America possesses at this time. Her short stories have achieved a wider fame for her than anything else, and quite rightly. As a poet she does pleasant and sometimes interesting work, but it is impossible to say more. As a dramatist she wrote one play—the play that captured Winthrop Ames's prize—which was splendidly imaginative and even rather poetic, but as undramatic as a "book play" can be. It never had a chance of popular success. Does some one say that is nothing against it? It is everything against it. The play or the book that does not appeal to a wide audience has a fatal lack and no amount of "literary" merit can make up for that lack.

As a novelist Miss Brown can be absolutely unreadable. If you don't believe that try to go through *My Love and I,* first published under the pen name "Martin Redfield." It is Stevenson with the Scotch left out. Again, she can write a book like *The Prisoner,* which is as fine in its way as anything John Galsworthy ever did. In its way? Nothing derogatory, we assure you! The way is American, not English; that's all (as Miss Brown would say).

It is perhaps unfortunate that in a book dealing with American women novelists it should be necessary to confine the consideration of Alice Brown to her novels;

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but this disadvantage to her is no greater than the disadvantage to Edna Ferber or one or two others whose best work is not in the novel form. Since the restriction does Miss Brown, on the whole, a considerable injustice, let us restrict a little further and consider only her best novel. We shall then be doing as much as we can to redress the balance in her favor and perhaps more than we ought to do. But chivalry is not dead.

The Prisoner is the story of a relatively young man who has just come out of prison and whose readjustment to the world he is reëntering is a keenly interesting subject. The very first thing to be noted is the absolute originality and freshness of Miss Brown's conception of her story. This, perhaps innocently, we believe to be without a literary parallel.

Ninety-nine out of a hundred novelists, in these days probably 999 out of 1,000, and of women novelists 9,999 out of 10,000, would see the released man in a single aspect. The victim of society, of course; prison reform, sociology, Thomas Mott Osborneism, uplift, the cruelty of the world in letting a man out after having once put him in (for it is much more of a punishment to release a man from jail than to incarcerate him), cruelty, wrong, cruelty, injustice, cruelty, the way of the world, cruelty——.

Now the basis of this general attitude is an incurable sentimentality, and Miss Brown is not sentimental but sanative, made so by a gift of humor and laughter. She is, it is true, rather deeply interested in ideas as ideas, and in *The Prisoner* she has packed a few more than can be found in any American novel

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of the last dozen years. The root idea is that expressed by the prisoner—or ex-prisoner—himself. As Jeff says, with a flash of insight (prisoners learn to look within), the real difficulty is not that a man is in prison, but that he's outside the law. And on the last page of the book the same idea is paraphrased, put even more perfectly, by Miss Brown, who says of Lydia that she knew by her talk with Jeff and reading what he had imperfectly written "that he meant to be eternally free through fulfilling the incomprehensible paradox of binding himself to the law."

This will not appeal to persons who have not been taught by Gilbert K. Chesterton the art of lucid thinking. The fact that a man is in prison is unimportant; it is a mere symptom or consequence of the terrible thing which is the matter with him. For his presence there is simply evidence that he put himself, or got himself, outside the law. In pursuit of money, or a woman, or what not sort of game he has cut himself off from the community of mankind and it will be a miracle if he can get back into it. The mere fact that he has committed a crime is very little one way or the other, almost meaningless in itself. If he is "outside" and so cut off in mind and spirit and imagination from all his fellows, what is to them a crime will bear to him no immoral aspect whatever. For what is a crime? Something that we agree must not go unpunished. Something that "we" agree. But the man "outside" is not one of us any longer if he ever was.

At the risk of seeming to digress we must endeavor

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to make this very clear, for otherwise *The Prisoner* will be, in its real import, lost on the reader. Human nature being what it is there is no way to prevent a man getting "outside" if the bent takes him. There are many ways in which we try to keep every one in the fellowship—for society is essentially a spiritual alliance and with a creed so broad that we make laws simply to state what is *not* in that creed, the whole creed itself being entirely beyond our powers of expression. But there is no sure way to keep men from getting "outside" the fellowship. And once they have got outside the real problem is to get them back in. They can get back in only voluntarily and of their own free will, and only by binding themselves to the law. Law, not laws. What they must accept is the inexpressible creed of fellowship and their acceptance of that carries with it an acceptance of the things barred by it, the things we make laws about.

And the only hope of getting a man who has got "outside" to accept the creed and reënter the fellowship is to convince him that only by so doing can he achieve freedom, that only by binding himself to the unwritten law can he become "eternally free." If you can make him see that, you have salvaged him for society. As the surest way to make a man see a thing is to let him discover it for himself we have invented prisons. Do not be deceived by the stupid notion that prisons are to punish men or even to protect society from their evil depredations. Prisons are the result of a deep, very sensible, entirely unshakeable piece of knowledge which we collectively possess, namely, that the man who has put himself beyond the pale

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must himself bring himself within it again. To that end we enclose him in four symbolic brick walls. We give him no physical or bodily escape. And so, after a time, he makes a mental escape and finds himself still essentially free, though physically in jail! So at last he comes to understand and accept the paradox that he can be free in no other way—ever.

The idea deserves expanding, but the reader will probably consider that we have intruded unpardonably with it in this chapter anyway. However, we can see no other means of making clear the philosophic basis of Miss Brown's fine novel. Of its other features we shall not even bother to speak. It is well written, of course; it offers persons and situations that are both metaphysical and melodramatic and therefore, in this indissolubility of thought and feeling, lifelike, amazing, comical, thought-provoking—why heap up adjectives? The character drawing is simply superb and a better executed figure than Madame Beattie cannot be found in the whole range of American fiction. Miss Amabel is hardly inferior. Weedon Moore, Alston Choate, the rigid and motionless but perfectly well grandmother in bed, Rhoda Knox—there is no gainsaying the fidelity of these people to observed facts and existences. If Henry James had had Madame Beattie's necklace in place of his golden bowls and sacred founts his art would have been expended on really worthy material, but he could not, nor could any one, have done more with it than Alice Brown has done.

On the strength of this one story Miss Brown must be placed very high on the roll of American novelists

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at least as high as we place, among the men, Owen Wister, by reason solely of that incomparable novel of the West, *The Virginian.*

Books by Alice Brown

Fools of Nature.
Meadow-Grass.
By Oak and Thorn.
Life of Mercy Otis Warren.
The Road to Castaly.
The Day of His Youth.
Robert Louis Stevenson—A Study (*with Louise Imogen Guiney*).
Tiverton Tales.
King's End, 1901.
Margaret Warrener, 1901.
The Mannerings.
High Noon.
Paradise.
The County Road, 1906.
The Court of Love, 1906.
Rose McLeod, 1908.
The Story of Thyrza, 1909.
Country Neighbors, 1910.
John Winterbourne's Family, 1910.
The One-Footed Fairy, 1911.
The Secret of the Clan, 1912.
My Love and I, 1912.
Vanishing Points, 1913.
Robin Hood's Barn, 1913.
Children of Earth, 1915.

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Bromley Neighborhood.
The Prisoner, 1916.
The Flying Teuton, 1918.

Published by The Macmillan Company, New York. Some of the earlier books by Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.

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CHAPTER III

ELLEN GLASGOW

ELLEN GLASGOW'S first two books were produced before she was twenty. She is a Virginian, like Mary Johnston, but a realist—better, a disciple of naturalism—and concerned with social and personal problems of the last thirty years. A dozen books stand to her credit, all novels except a book of verse, nearly all concerned with the social reconstruction in the South. Banish the connotations of the word "Reconstruction" as used respecting the South. The period immediately following the end of the civil war is almost the sole property of Thomas Dixon. Miss Glasgow's province for a number of years and a number of books has been the more gradual and more fateful making over of the South into something reasonably homogeneous with the rest of the United States than the leisured feudalism of the '50s and the hopeless wreck of the '60s.

She is a novelist of manners, but of changing manners; of cycles and transformations, whether in the lives of individuals or the life of a region. Unlike Miss Johnston, she cannot revive the past for its own sake, but only for the sake of the present and the future. She is an evolutionist who has not read Darwin and Herbert Spencer in vain. Her writing is

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filled with a serious purpose, the purpose to put life before you not merely as it is but as she thinks you should see it. She does not preach or moralize, being far too fine an artist for such crudities. It is enough to have given you the facts in *her interpretation* of them. She is quietly confident that you will not be able to get away from them, so presented. And you hardly ever are!

Miss Glasgow has had to drive so hard and so strongly and so much alone; she has had to face such a vast inertia of tradition and such a tenacity of feeling, that the struggle has narrowed her. She hates sentimentality, and rightly. It has been the terrible obstacle she has had to confront. Of her South she once said:

"I love it; I was brought up in it, but all my life I've had to struggle against the South's sentimentality, which I inherit. We shall sooner or later have to tear asunder that veil of sentimentality. Our people will have to realize that a statement made in criticism of the South is not an act of disloyalty. Please say that in as kind a way as possible," Miss Glasgow added, probably with some compunction, for, as she said on another occasion, when asked what the Southerners thought about her: "I have no idea. They are very kind to me." To finish her words about the struggle with inherited sentimentality: "I say it as a Southerner," she explained. "We must cultivate within us truth instead of sentimentality, which up to now has been our darling vice." These words were uttered in New York in the fall of 1912, a few months before the publication of her novel *Virginia,* the title

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referring, however, not to her State, but to the heroine of the book, Virginia Pendleton.

You can't fight sentimentality with tolerance and it is Miss Glasgow's handicap that to write the great books she has written, to succeed as she has succeeded under the most adverse conditions and in the most adverse environment, she has had to contract her horizon, even to shut her eyes and thrust with all her might ahead. Surrounded by sentimentality and the tradition of a past whose glorious perfection it were treason to question, she has not been able always to see things clearly and to see them whole. In the early part of 1916 she declared that contemporary English fiction was superior to American fiction, that Americans were demanding from writers and politicians alike an "evasive idealism" and a "sham optimism" and "a sugary philosophy, utterly without any basis in logic or human experience." There was some more to the same effect, but let us not harrow the souls of ourselves who rejoice in Ellen Glasgow's work by recalling any more of it. She was wrong, dead wrong; we think she would be the first to admit it now, but whether she would or not she is pretty completely to be excused if never to be defended. She was best answered at the time by Booth Tarkington, the greatest living American writer of fiction, with the allowable exception of William Dean Howells. Said Tarkington:

"It is human nature to desire optimism in anybody —in a doctor, or a friend, or a farm hand, or a dog. Of course, the public desires optimism in a book, and it wants not the 'cheapest sort of sham optimism,'

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but the finest sort of genuine optimism that it can understand. Naturally, the average understanding isn't the highest understanding; nevertheless, the writer who stoops to conquer doesn't conquer."

Mr. Tarkington went on to say:

"Miss Glasgow is sorry that there are so many writers willing to supply the demand for 'sugary philosophy,' but those writers are not only willing to supply; they are inspired to supply. They aren't superior people turning the trick for money, as Miss Glasgow seems to think; they are 'giving the best that is in them.' They take their art solemnly."

The truest word on the subject ever uttered and most essential to be reprinted here. It is not so much for the refutation of Miss Glasgow that we give it. The full application of Mr. Tarkington's remarks will be seen in some of the later chapters of this book.

But to return to our Southern realist.

Ellen Anderson Gholson Glasgow was born in Richmond, Virginia, April 22, 1874, the daughter of Francis Thomas Glasgow and Anne Jane (Gholson) Glasgow. Her father belonged to a family of professional men—lawyers, judges, educators. The child was of delicate health. She never went to school—an admission she makes with a blush. An aunt used to tell her Scott's stories at an age when Mother Goose is the customary intellectual fare. At thirteen she read and enjoyed Robert Browning. He is still her favorite poet, though Swinburne has a great place in her affections. Quite unaccountably Miss Glasgow showed a taste for scientific subjects. At eighteen she began "a systematic study of political economy and

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socialism." Her love for a story remained strong. The home was a strict Southern home, the women in it were "sheltered." The young woman would shut herself up in her room every day and later join the family for such diversions as they indulged in. Finally she went to her father and said:

"Father, I have written a book."

Isaac F. Marcosson says that Father was dumbfounded, and well he might have been. The novel was published anonymously and was generally supposed to be the work of a man of training and experience. It was *The Descendant,* and it has been characterized as "a rather morbid exposition of the development and life of an intellectual hybrid, the offspring of a low woman and a highly intellectual man."

The first book in which Miss Glasgow established her right to serious consideration as an American novelist—as a novelist picturing American life—was *The Voice of the People,* published in 1900. She has referred in after years to *The Descendant* as "a mere schoolgirl effort," although it was not received as such, not by a long shot! But she could not so characterize *The Voice of the People,* nor could any one else. It is a competent picture of the Virginia of the '80s with its class distinctions and its political maneuvering, framing a specific and dramatic story. The novel exhibits a considerable knowledge of political machinery and a characteristic tale relates how Miss Glasgow got some of the necessary "atmosphere." In 1897 she drove over twenty miles in the hottest August weather in order to sit through two days of a Democratic State convention. An old family friend, a

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delegate to the convention, smuggled Miss Glasgow and her sister on to the stage of the opera house in which the sessions were held. They were the only women in the building and the ordeal of listening to two days of Southern oratory must have been as severe as the ordeal of sitting, obscurely and uncomfortably, in a sun-baked theater.

It is also said of Miss Glasgow that she remarked one day to a friend—Mr. Marcosson, if we are not mistaken: "I am going to write a novel of New York life."

"But why New York life when you know Virginia and the South so well?"

"For the simple reason that art has no locality. It is universal. I do not believe that any writer should be confined to any particular locality."

A reply which throws light on Miss Glasgow's earnestness and seriousness of purpose. But she was, while entirely right in what she said, not answering the question. Art has no locality, but the artist has necessarily only a few localities—those he knows tolerably well. Miss Glasgow's pictures of New York life never carry the conviction that her Virginia settings do.

Her own Virginia setting is a very lovely one. Number One West Main Street, Richmond, is a square old white house, "hemmed in by trees that cast shade over the soldiers of the Confederacy." Behind it is a garden in which walks and composes a beautiful woman with red-gold hair, the real Titian shade or simply red-brown, as you may decide. It is wavy and has gold and copper gleams. "Once more you get the

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touch of Jane Austen," explains Mr. Marcosson. He tells us that Miss Glasgow writes every morning and always behind a locked door; "a door that is not locked has always given her a hint of possible intrusion. The only animate thing that has ever shared the comradeship of her work is her dog, Joy. She writes rapidly and in a large, masculine hand."

Rapidly, perhaps, but not finally. Nearly every bit of *Virginia* and *Life and Gabriella* was rewritten at least three times, some parts more; and one chapter was rewritten thirteen times. It sounds incredible, but Miss Glasgow says so herself. She used to write with a pen, but now does her first draft in pencil and revises after it has been typewritten.

And always novels. "I cannot write short stories," Miss Glasgow explains. "They bore me excruciatingly. The whole technique of the short story and the novel is different. All the best of the short stories must be painfully condensed with slight regard for the evolutionary causes bringing about this or that effect. Everything that I see, I see in the form of a novel—as a large canvas. I want to trace the process of cause and effect; and that is why both *Virginia* and *Gabriella* were a joy in the writing. Those books do not deal with problems. I do not ever let a problem get into my novels—there is none, except, of course, as some problem of an individual life may present itself to the character. I am not concerned with any propaganda. A book should never serve any purpose but the telling of life as it is—being faithfully realistic.

"And realism is only the truth of life told, and is

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the writer's true business. Hawthorne was strongly realistic. He did not try to be pleasing or pleasant. He wrote things as he saw them.

"I must live with a character a long time. Then the desire to write comes and I begin after that to shape the background, and the details of plot weave into their proper places. I never force myself to begin a piece of work nor force myself to keep at it, when the something within stops. And I never get an idea by looking for one. They just come, always unexpectedly and always at the most inopportune times and places—at a reception, on the train, on the street."

When Miss Glasgow says that she does not let a problem get into her novels, she means that she does not put it there, or consciously put it there. She selects her people, who have *their* individual problems as she concedes, and brings them into relation with each other and from that relation a problem may arise, probably does. But that is a natural and artistic procedure, the perfect antithesis of the propagandist's methods. Once to Montrose J. Moses Miss Glasgow talked rather freely about novel writing and her literary ideals.

"There are three things a novelist has to do to prove himself," she declared. "First, he must show an ability to create personalities; second, he must exhibit a sincerity of style; and third, he must evince the capacity for an intelligent criticism of life. Without these he is not worth very much in a serious, big way. To contribute to the knowledge and understanding of life—that should be his motive in writing, not primarily to create a pleasant impression.

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"There have been several stages in our growth since the special type of fiction was evolved. There was the sentimentality of Richardson; then came my favorite, Fielding, our first realist; and finally arrived the critical period with its early representative in Jane Austen and more recent upholder in Meredith. We had to pass through stages far from real life before we reached the time of direct dealing with life, of real criticism of life. Take such men as Wells and Galsworthy—and maybe Arnold Bennett;—are they not trying to see life through and through? I do not believe in the realism that merely depicts for the picture. Realism of the kind I mean not only depicts, but interprets as well."

"How about Fielding, your favorite?" asked Mr. Moses.

"Oh, he had his faults, but they were honest ones." Mr. Moses remarked Miss Glasgow's enthusiasm as she talked. "He was the first to teach us that life—and ordinary life, too—has poetry in it. There are some of our writers with a social conscience who use narrative as a mere vehicle for philosophy. It is always well to have a big central idea to hold the building together, but realism—though some novelists would separate it—cannot be practiced apart from vision. The novelist must have a perspective in life.

"When I first began writing I steeped myself in economics, in sociology—and later in German mysticism. But one learns only that he may unlearn, if necessary. In doing *Virginia* I was obliged to revisit certain localities to refresh my memory of things.

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But I could not write of them immediately; the impressions had to filter through my imagination.

"A man who writes for his age seldom writes for any other. And that is why I do not believe in being consciously local. Mr. Howells, as our greatest realist, made us see the poetry of the life he knew best. While I've never consciously been influenced by any school, I have felt what he has done for the novel. At one time I knew my Balzac, my Flaubert, my Guy de Maupassant, by heart. And of course I read the Russians, who, I think, are the greatest of all novelists. But as far as I am aware, I have worked my own method out for myself."

Because she believes so much in the novel form, Miss Glasgow has never written a play nor ever consented to the dramatization of any of her books. "I like the flow of the novel," she says. "It is the best expression of the people and the times. The drama cannot comprehend all of life as it is to-day. A larger canvas is needed to picture the greater complexity. The greatest drama was written in times when life was far more simple than it is now. The novel alone can take in its flow all of this complexity."

Add to Miss Glasgow's literary tastes Maeterlinck, Spinoza, Ruskin and the Bible. She was for years "tremendously interested" (Mr. Marcosson's words) in the literature of the Orient. There is a little brass Buddha on her desk in the house in Richmond. The fatalistic touch, or more accurately, the sense of the law of recompense and the payments life is always exacting, pervades her stories. Certain ideas are for her garbed in definite phrases. Take, for example,

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the titles of two of her books, *The Wheel of Life* (1906) and *The Ancient Law* (1908). They merely repeat the titles of the final chapter and the final book, respectively, in her earlier novel, *The Deliverance.*

For some years Miss Glasgow has divided her time between her Richmond home and a pleasant New York apartment overlooking Central Park, an apartment which somehow, with its books, its portrait of Miss Glasgow empaneled, its white pillars at the entrance to the reception room, its books, books, books in mahogany cases, preserves a good deal of the atmosphere of a Southern home. Miss Glasgow comes to New York "for the change," and also to get the life of New York which has alternated with the life of Virginia in her later books.

Virginia, as her most popular book and the cause of a considerable controversy on its appearance in 1913, must receive some attention in this sketch. It is the first book of a trilogy—provided Miss Glasgow writes the third! *Life and Gabriella* was the second book of the uncompleted trilogy. Let us see what Miss Glasgow has had to say about these books. We assume that the reader knows her to have been an ardent suffragist and advocate of economic independence for her sex.

"Success for a woman" (Miss Glasgow is speaking) "must be about the same as for a man. Success for a woman means a harmonious adjustment to life. Material success is not success if it does not also bring happiness.

"The great thing in life is the development of character to a point where one may mold his destiny.

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One must use the circumstances of life rather than be used by them. The greatest success for a woman is to be the captain of her own soul.

"Women have always been in revolt." (This in answer to a question as to whether *Life and Gabriella* was intended to express the modern revolt of women.) "It is only now that the revolt is strong enough to break through the crust. No matter what her condition or class, woman does not now have to marry for support, because she is ashamed to be unmarried, or because she is hounded to it by her relatives. She dare remain single.

"I believe that marriage should be made more difficult and divorce easier. I also believe that divorce laws should be made more uniform. Laws made for traffic and commercial ends may need to be changed when a certain arbitrary boundary is passed, but laws made for human nature should be everywhere the same, for the man who lives in California and the one in Maine are—just men.

"The mistake women, wives, have always made is that they have concentrated too intensely on emotion. They have made emotion the only thing in the world. Husband and wife must be mentally companionable if their happiness is to last through the years.

"I find one of the most fascinating dramas in all the facets of life to be the great epic of changing conditions and the adjustment of individuals to the new order. Naturally the battle is always sharpest and most dramatic in those places where the older system has been most firmly intrenched. And that is why the coming of the new order in the South has been

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attended by so many dramatic stories. When I began *Virginia* I had in mind three books dealing with the adjustment of human lives to changing conditions.

"In *Virginia* I wanted to do the biography of a woman, representative of the old system of chivalry and showing her relation to that system and the changing order. Virginia's education, like that of every well-bred Southern woman of her day, was designed to paralyze her reasoning faculties and to eliminate all danger of mental unsettling. Virginia was the passive and helpless victim of the ideal of feminine self-sacrifice. The circumstances of her life first molded and then dominated her.

"Gabriella was the product of the same school, but instead of being used by circumstances, she used them to create her own destiny. The two books are exact converses. Where Virginia is passive, Gabriella is active.

"Virginia desired happiness, but did not expect it, much less fight for it, and consequently in a system where self-sacrifice was the ideal of womanhood she became submerged by circumstances just as have been so many other women of her type. Gabriella, on the other hand, desired happiness and insisted on happiness. Gabriella had the courage of action and through molding circumstances wrested from life her happiness and success."

"And the third book?" The reader must not think from the condensed and coalesced extracts of what Miss Glasgow has said about her work that she talks readily. She does not. You have, sometimes, rather to drag it out of her—that is, what you want concern-

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ing her own work. On literature generally she talks with freedom, wisdom and point.

"The third book may never be written," Miss Glasgow answered. "If it should be, it will deal with a woman who faces her world with the weapons of indirect influence or subtlety."

Gabriella's philosophy was summed up in her words: "I want to be happy. I have a right to be happy, and it depends on myself. No life is so hard that you can't make it easier by the way you take it." In the face of disaster which would have broken the hearts of many women, she won her success, her happiness, from the cruelties of life.

"I believe," Miss Glasgow once said, "that a person gets out of life just what he puts into it—or rather he puts in more than he gets out, I suppose; for he is always working for something unattainable; always groping vaguely with his spirit to find the hidden things. Gabriella, as you may remember, was 'obliged to believe in something or die.'"

We have heard Miss Glasgow tell how she lives with a character. She is, or was, living with the character which will become the central figure in the third novel of her probable trilogy. "The time is not ripe to write," she said, when last speaking about this possible book. "As soon as I begin to speak of the character it all leaves me. For some years I wrote one book every two years. Three years elapsed between *Virginia* and *Life and Gabriella.* I have no idea when the next will be finished. I cannot understand how any one can finish and publish two books a year regularly. It seems that one ought to give

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more of one's self to a book than that. For my own part, I should like to write each novel and keep it ten years before I publish it. But my friends tell me, 'Of course, that is impossible. You change so much in ten years—all would be different. You would be obliged to write it all over again.' I suppose that is true."

Very true. But the dissatisfaction with the ten-year-old novel would be the dissatisfaction of the conscientious artist, Ellen Glasgow. It would not be the dissatisfaction of the novel reader. At least, re-reading *The Deliverance* these fourteen years after its first publication, your admiration for Miss Glasgow's finished art, her sense of drama, her penetration of the human heart, her portraitive skill, her fine sense of the retributive conscience implanted in the human breast—all these blended perceptions and satisfactions are as lively as they were when the book first came out. Really the only difference is that now you look confidently for them and are, though no less rejoiced and grateful, not in the least surprised at the finding.

Miss Glasgow's peculiar brilliance has never received a more honest or better tribute than in what Gene Stratton-Porter had to say after reading *Virginia*. It is worth quoting in full:

"The writings of Miss Ellen Glasgow have always possessed a unique and special charm for me that has carried me from one book to another for the pleasure derived from reading, with no special effort on my part to learn just why I enjoyed them. Last summer a man quoted in my presence a line of Miss Glasgow's, something like this: 'Not being able to

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give her the finer gift of the spirit, he loaded her with jewels.'

"My dictionary defines an epigram, 'A bright or witty thought tersely and sharply expressed, often ending satirically.' A saying like this almost reaches that level. At any rate, it stuck in my mind, and when a friend recently sent me a copy of Miss Glasgow's latest book, I began reading it with the thought in mind that I would watch and see if she could say other things of like quality. My patience! She rolls them unendingly. Before I had read twenty pages I realized just where lay the charm that had always held me. It was not in plot, nor in character drawing, not in construction; it was in the woman expressing her own individuality with her pen. What a gift of expression she has! I know of no other woman and very few men who can equal her on this one point.

"Chesterton does the same thing, with a champagne sparkle and bubble, but I would hesitate to say that even he surpasses her, for while he is bubbling and sparkling on the surface, charming, alluring, holding one, she is down among the fibers of the heart, her bright brain and keen wit cutting right and left with the precision of a skilled surgeon. Not so witty, but fully as wise.

"You have only to read *Virginia* to convince yourself.

" 'Having married, they immediately proceeded, as if by mutual consent, to make the worst of it.'

" 'Having lived through the brief illumination of

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romance, she had come at last into that steady glow which encompasses the commonplace.'

" 'To demand that a pretty woman should possess the mental responsibility of a human being would have seemed an affront to his inherited ideas of gallantry.'

" 'If the texture of his soul was not finely wrought, the proportions of it were heroic.'

" 'From the day of his marriage he had never been able to deny her anything she had set her heart upon—not even the privilege of working herself to death for his sake when the opportunity offered.'

" 'You know how Abby is about men.' 'Yes, I know, and it's just the way men are about Abby.'

" 'How on earth could she go out sewing by the day if she didn't have her religious convictions?'

" 'Anybody who has mixed with beggars oughtn't to turn up his nose at a respectable bank.' 'But he says that it's because the bank is so respectable that he doesn't think he could stand it.'

" 'She was as respectable as the early '80s and the 21,000 inhabitants of Dinwiddie permitted a woman to be.'

"These lines are offered as a taste of her quality, and they roll from her pen in every paragraph."

In accordance with the general method of this book we have thought it best to put Ellen Glasgow, certainly a genius, certainly one of the greatest living American novelists, perhaps one of the greatest since there has been an American literature—we have thought it best to put her, we say, before the reader chiefly in her own words and in her aspect to others,

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just as she would herself let a character in one of her books reveal himself by his speeches and his actions and stand before you as the other characters sized him up. She would not tell you what sort of man he was and require you to swallow her account of him; she would set him before you, talking and going about; she would give you the impression he made on those about him, and let you judge him for yourself—the only right way. We have only one thing more which we want to point out at the close, Miss Glasgow's insight into the mind and conscience of her people. It is best illustrated, and we give the close of a chapter in *The Deliverance*—after all, is not this wonderful story the finest of Miss Glasgow's novels, we wonder? Christopher Blake, the illiterate heir of a great name, the cherisher of an undying hate, has succeeded in ruining or hastening the ruin of Will Fletcher, grandson of the man who stole the Blake plantation. It is Blake's revenge. He can reach old Fletcher through the boy and he has done it. He, a Blake, living in a wretched shack, while the erstwhile negro overseer dwells at Blake Hall!

"Before him were his knotted and blistered hands, his long limbs outstretched in their coarse clothes, but in the vision beyond the little spring he walked proudly with his rightful heritage upon him—a Blake by force of blood and circumstance. The world lay before him—bright, alluring, a thing of enchanting promise, and it was as if he looked for the first time upon the possibilities contained in this life upon the earth. For an instant the glow lasted—the beauty dwelt upon the vision, and he beheld, clear and radiant, the hap-

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piness which might have been his own; then it grew dark again, and he faced the brutal truth in all its nakedness: he knew himself for what he was—a man debased by ignorance and passion to the level of the beasts. He had sold his birthright for a requital, which had sickened him even in the moment of fulfillment.

"To do him justice, now that the time had come for an acknowledgment, he felt no temptation to evade the judgment of his own mind, nor to cheat himself with the belief that the boy was marked for ruin before he saw him—that Will had worked out, in vicious weakness, his own end. It was not the weakness, after all, that he had played upon—it was rather the excitable passion and the whimpering fears of the hereditary drunkard. He remembered now the long days that he had given to his revenge, the nights when he had tossed sleepless while he planned a widening of the breach with Fletcher. That, at least, was his work, and his alone—the bitter hatred, more cruel than death, with which the two now stood apart and snarled. It was a human life that he had taken in his hand—he saw that now in his first moment of awakening—a life that he had destroyed as deliberately as if he had struck it dead before him. Day by day, step by step, silent, unswerving, devilish, he had kept about his purpose, and now at the last he had only to sit still and watch his triumph.

"With a sob, he bowed his head in his clasped hands, and so shut out the light."

Powerful? Yes, the passage shows an unlimited mastery of the novelist's real material, the human

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soul. *The Deliverance* is a story of revenge with few equals and, that we can recall, no superiors; but it goes far beyond that, because it shows also the retributive and regenerative forces at work in Christopher Blake and their final effect upon him. The hour in which he surrenders himself to justice as Fletcher's murderer, while the dead man's grandchild flees, is the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual reformation, a reformation to come but to be preceded by an atonement. Wonderful among heroines is Maria Fletcher; wonderful, infinitely pathetic, matchlessly moving, is the blind grandmother sitting stiff and straight in her Elizabethan chair, directing the hundreds of slaves who are slaves no longer, discoursing upon the duties of the children who inherit a splendid name, recalling with tenderness and spirit and racial pride the great people of her youth, giving orders that are never executed, eating her bit of chicken and sipping her port, blind—blind—successfully deceived, successfully kept alive and contented and in a sort of way happy these twenty years since the slave Phyllis "'got some ridiculous idea about freedom in her head, and ran away with the Yankee soldiers before we whipped them.'"

A magnificent portrait, by an artist of whom America can never be anything but proud.

Books by Ellen Glasgow

The Descendant, 1897.
Phases of an Inferior Planet, 1898.
The Voice of the People, 1900.

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The Freeman and Other Poems, 1902.
The Battleground, 1902.
The Deliverance, 1904.
The Wheel of Life, 1906.
The Ancient Law, 1908.
The Romance of a Plain Man, 1909.
The Miller of Old Church, 1911.
Virginia, 1913.
Life and Gabriella, 1916.

Miss Glasgow's first two books were brought out by Harper & Brothers, New York; all the rest are published by Doubleday, Page & Company, New York.

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CHAPTER IV

GERTRUDE ATHERTON

GERTRUDE ATHERTON has been the subject of more controversy than any other living American novelist. It is one of the best evidences of her importance. England, we are told, regards her as the greatest living novelist of America. Many Americans so rate her. Abroad, the opinion of her work approaches something like unanimity and it is very high. At home unanimity is nowhere. Prophets are not the only ones who occasionally suffer a lack of honor in their own countries.

A good deal of it comes out of Mrs. Atherton's long-standing and vigorous assault on the literary schools of William Dean Howells and Henry James. Pick up her novel *Patience Sparhawk and Her Times,* written over twenty years ago, and you will find a trace of that feeling in her delineation of Patience's schoolteacher, who read these literary gods. But Mrs. Atherton seldom speaks her mind by indirection; all who cared have known her opinions as fast as she reached them. She has no use for commonplace people in life or fiction; and by commonplace people we mean not everyday people, but people about whom there is no distinction of thought or sensibility, who have no sharpness, no individuality however simple, no gift however slight. Henry James Forman says

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that Mrs. Atherton is the novelist of genius, but this is one of those brilliantly epigrammatic characterizations which convey the truth by bold exaggeration. She has not always written of geniuses, but always she has written of men and women who had backbone, courage, distinct and recognizable selves, ambition, wit, daring, not merely flash but fire. She really writes about herself in dozens of reincarnations. Nothing daunts her that is alive—vulgarity, wickedness, weakness and bold sin she can understand and portray as accurately as the shining virtues. The only thing she cannot endure is the dead-alive. Mr. Forman was in essentials right when he said of her in the New York *Evening Post* of June 15, 1918:

"Genius has a particular fascination for her, and with a rare boldness she would rather face difficulties of creating or re-creating genius in her fiction than to waste time on mediocre protagonists. With the newer school of English and American novelists, with the Frank Swinnertons, the J. D. Beresfords, or the Mary Wattses, she has nothing in common, unless it be their patience. But she will not expend that patience on the drab or the colorless.

"An Alexander Hamilton or a Rezanov seems to be made to her hand, and if she cannot find what she wants in history or in fact, she prefers to dream of a woman genius, the young German countess, Gisela Niebuhr, a Brunnhilde who leads her sisters to revolt against Prussianism and all that makes Germany hideous to the world to-day.

"To understand genius, it has been said, is to approach it, and Mrs. Atherton beyond any doubt under-

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stands genius. She understands its trials, temptations, vagaries and accomplishments. She knows that the fires which feed it are certain to break out in many ways aside from its recognized work. Did Mrs. Atherton take the trouble to acknowledge the existence of Mrs. Grundy, it would be only that she might destroy that unpopular lady.

"'Brains' is Mrs. Atherton's favorite word. Any printer who sets up a novel of hers must add a special stock to his font of the six letters that spell it. Neither in her life nor in her work has she any patience with dullness. She could no more have written *Pollyanna* than she could have written the *Book of Job*. The blithe, all-conquering brain is her field of research."

Mrs. Atherton, he tells us, neither talks nor writes "like a book." She is "always buoyant and stimulating. Brains occupy as much space in her talk as in her books. She is never dull." And turning to *The Conqueror,* he develops his idea:

"There were, we know, a few persons who resisted Alexander Hamilton. But important though they were, they were as dust under Mrs. Atherton's feet. Hamilton led a charmed life. Hurricanes had spared him and the storms of war, of party, of faction left him safe. He was a *genius,* and cosmic forces enfolded him as in a protective shell. Surely no character was ever more certainly created to the hand of a novelist than was Hamilton for Mrs. Atherton. Not a merit or fault of his, but Mrs. Atherton could caress it with a mother's hand. How she hates Clinton because he fought her idol, and how much she

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despises Jefferson! But Washington—even the most austere of the virtues of Washington pass with Mrs. Atherton, because he loved Hamilton as a father loves a son. . . .

"Critics have sometimes charged Mrs. Atherton with the grave misdemeanor of writing like herself, not like somebody else; of not being Mrs. Wharton, of not being Henry James or Robert Louis Stevenson. The charge is just. She is not any of those persons, nor in the least like them. She does not write for a handful of other writers, nor does she waste much time in polishing sentences. She writes for the public. . . . You cannot read five pages of her fiction without feeling certain that their author has lived life, not merely dreamed it."

This is the most illuminating comment on Mrs. Atherton that has so far seen the light of day, and we shall not attempt more than to supply a footnote or two. Mr. Forman says that Mrs. Atherton writes for the public and not for writers. True, but is it the public which reads Gene Stratton-Porter or *Pollyanna*? Decidedly not. Her public—a very large one—consists of those who do not ask or desire that fiction shall interpret them to themselves or shape their lives for them, consciously or otherwise. It is made up of the thousands who are capable of some degree of purely æsthetic enjoyment in literature. For the pure æsthetes Mrs. Wharton *et al.* For the unæsthetic and ethical the two Mrs. Porters. For the great host who appreciate literary art and story-telling skill but who won't sacrifice everything for them, who demand a real narrative, color, action, suspense and seek no

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moral end in the tale to justify the tale's existence—for them Mrs. Atherton. And they—these people of her vast audience—are the great middle ground. They represent in their attitude toward fiction the healthiest note of all.

The "literary" or highbrow attitude toward Mrs. Atherton is perfectly conveyed in an article upon her by Mr. H. W. Boynton, also published in the New York *Evening Post* but over two years earlier, on February 26, 1916. We extract a few illustrative sentences:

"I may say frankly that I write of Mrs. Atherton not out of a special admiration for her work," begins Mr. Boynton, in a highly self-revelatory manner, "but because for any surveyor of modern American fiction she is so evidently a figure in some measure 'to be reckoned with.' . . . Her publicity may be said to have been extraordinary in proportion to her achievement. . . . The person who is examining her work as literature can find nothing to the purpose here (*Mrs. Balfame*)."

How comfortable to feel like that! Mrs. Atherton, with an amused smile, would probably say, at the intimation that there was no "literature" in *Mrs. Balfame,* and perhaps other of her books: "But life is so much more than literature!" When Mr. Boynton charges her with leaving life out of her books Mrs. Atherton will be seriously exercised.

Gertrude Atherton is a great grandniece of Benjamin Franklin. She was born in 1859 in San Francisco, the daughter of Thomas L. Horn. She was educated at St. Mary's Hall, Benicia, California, and

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at Sayre Institute, Lexington, Kentucky. At an early age she was married to George H. Bowen Atherton, a Californian who declined to travel and who died when he finally was lured to Chile as a guest on a warship. Mrs. Atherton describes her marriage as "one of the most important incidents of my school life."

She had always wanted to go round about the world and when she wasn't able to do so she amused herself by writing complete travel books, taking her characters through all parts of Europe. She knew enough geography to make her stories truthful.

"And I believe," Mrs. Atherton told Alma Luise Olsen in an interview appearing in *Books and the Book World* of *The Sun,* New York, on March 31, 1918, "that I apply some of those same ideas to my writing of fiction to-day. Most lives are humdrum and commonplace, on the surface at least. So I take characters that haven't had half a chance in real life and re-create their destinies for them and—well, my books are the result. I got the idea from Taine when I was very young."

This interview also threw interesting light on Mrs. Atherton's novel, *The Avalanche,* announced for publication in the spring of 1919 by Frederick A. Stokes Company, New York. *The Avalanche* is a tale of California society with a mystery plot, and deals with a young woman whose devoted but shrewd New York husband will not rest until he has solved the puzzle of appearances surrounding her. Mrs. Atherton, submerged most of the time in her New York apartment on Riverside Drive with war work—she returned

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from the European battlefronts to be the American head of Le Bien-être du Blesse, "the welfare of the wounded"—rose to the surface several days in the week at a quiet country spot in New Jersey, and wrote. The story developing thirteen chapters, she split the last in two.

"I wrote and copied 50,000 words in seven weeks —which shows what one can do away from the telephone. Margaret Anglin told me the original incident and attempted to persuade me to write it as a play for her. Now that the book is finished she would never recognize any part of it but an incident in the climax.

"That's always the way with writing novels and stories. I never know how they are going to come out when I begin, any more than I could take a child right now and say just how I was going to shape its whole life.

"Most writers who deal with California in their books tell about nature and the plain people and the proletariat and such things. No one but myself has ever told anything about social life in San Francisco. It is full of drama. It resembles New York in part, but it has a character all its own."

Mrs. Atherton works every morning from seven until noon, and does with dry bread and tea for a working lunch. Her New York apartment has balconied windows overlooking the Hudson. Before the door of the house which contains it stands a Barnard College dormitory. Eleanor Gates, writing in *Books and Authors* for September, 1917, said:

"In the wintertime, on 'first Sundays,' the Atherton

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apartment gathers in a very crush of notables—authors, painters, soldiers, diplomats, publishers, journalists, people of fashion, scholars, travelers and not a few who figure under the general title of 'admirers of genius,' and who have maneuvered for a card. Mrs. Atherton has the Englishwoman's interest in world politics; her knowledge of things European is of the rare first-hand kind; her horizon is international. The lucky old-time friend of the author's from 'out West' meets in her drawing-room a good percentage of the most distinguished people of the metropolis, along with men and women who are prominent abroad."

It is undoubtedly true that Mrs. Atherton, had she lived in France prior to 1789, would have been a woman of a salon. If there are modern de Staëls she is among them!

The first book of Mrs. Atherton's read by the present writer was *Senator North,* and he still holds it to be one of her best. It was written in Rouen and published in 1900. Mr. Boynton cites it as evidence that she is "both consciously and unconsciously an American." He thinks that "her spread-eagling, her 'barbaric yawp,' audible if involuntary," was what won attention for her in England "before her own country had begun to notice her." And before Mr. Boynton had begun to notice her.

Mrs. Atherton has traveled very widely. Before she starts work on a new novel she visits the contemplated scene of action. She studies the characteristics of the people and exhausts all her sources of information concerning the place and its history. As a result

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vividness is never lacking in her books, "local color" is there in such measure as she may determine desirable, character-drawing is reënforced by traits observed as well as traits assumed. She is both quick and keen. She notes and then generalizes with broad, sweeping conclusions. Faults of taste are imputed to her, but this means merely that those who make the criticism would exercise a different selective choice over the teemingly abundant material she invariably accumulates. Faults of structure are charged to her by those who do not like the way she and her characters shape amorphous life to their own ends. "Lack of control of her material" is the disapproving phrase. Mrs. Atherton has "style" only in the larger sense of self-expression, "but in the sense of that special and trained skill by which an artist expresses life with an almost infallible fitness, it is difficult to connect the word with her at all." We should hope so. The "almost infallible fitness" makes for the satisfaction of those who have their own infallible standards of what is fit. Life hasn't any. It lets anything happen. Life is vulgar, broad, incongruous, surprising, touching.

"My style is all my own, and not the result of magazine training—which stamps the work of every other writer of the first class in the country." There is something in that and those who quarrel with it do so mainly because they won't allow Mrs. Atherton a certain exaggeration of statement to drive her point home.

Even Mr. Boynton allows that *Perch of the Devil* contains some of Mrs. Atherton's finest work and is "a considerable book in its way." The character of

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Ida Compton is one which has excited and still excites so much interest that it is worth while to quote Mrs. Atherton's own explanation of how she came to go to Butte, Montana, and evolve her. She had been struck, as who has not, by the marvelous adaptability of American women in the capitals of Europe; "four or five years of wealth, study, travel, associations, and they are fitted to hold their own with any of Europe's ancient aristocracies.

"I met so many of these women when I lived in Europe," explains Mrs. Atherton, "that it finally occurred to me to visit some of the Western towns and study the type at its source. The result is Ida Compton. In the various stages of her development, moreover—beginning when she was the young daughter of a Butte miner and laundress—I found myself meeting all American women in one. The West to-day—particularly the Northwest—embodies what used to be known as merely 'American.' Any one of practically all the Western women of nerve, ambition, and large latent abilities, that I met in my travels through their section of the country, might develop into a leader of New York society, a Roman-American matron, or a member of Queen Mary's court, frowning upon too smart society. With their puritanical inheritance they might even develop into good Bostonians, although they 'gravitate' naturally to the more fluid societies. If they choose to retain their slang, they 'put it over' with an innocent dash that is a part of their natural refinement. They are virtuous by instinct, and atmospherically broadminded; full of easy good nature, but quick to resent a personal liberty; they are both sophisticated

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and direct, honest and subtle. With all their undiluted Americanism there is no development beyond them, no rôle they cannot play. For that reason these Ida Comptons are fundamentally all American women. The crudest remind one constantly of hundreds of women one knows in the higher American civilizations. And I found studying them at the source and developing one of them from 'the ground up,' watching all her qualities—good and bad—grow, diminish, fuse, but never quite change, even more interesting than meeting the finished product in Europe and amusing myself speculating upon her past."

In the long list of Mrs. Atherton's books with which this chapter concludes it would be desirable, but it is hardly possible, to follow the example of guidebooks and star and doublestar her more important novels. It is impracticable because any such designations would have to be those of a single taste or of a coterie of tastes. *Patience Sparhawk,* the dramatized biography of Alexander Hamilton called *The Conqueror,* and possibly her recent novel of a German revolution, or the revolt of the German women under the leadership of Gisela Niebuhr, would be marked with the double star; certainly *The Conqueror* would. The present writer would singlestar *Senator North* and the novels of early California—*The Doomswoman, Rezanov, The Splendid Idle Forties* and *The Californians.* Of *The Living Present* we must speak to call attention to the final paper in the book's second part, a tribute to four New York women, of whom one is Honoré Willsie, the subject of a later chapter in this book. *The Living Present* is not a novel. The first half is con-

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cerned with French women in war time, the fruit of Mrs. Atherton's observations and experience in war work; the second half has the general title *Feminism in Peace and War*. *Perch of the Devil* must be doublestarred, so probably must *Ancestors* and *Tower of Ivory*. Such books as *Rulers of Kings* and *The Travelling Thirds* are least important. *Mrs. Balfame*, as a capital mystery story, the result doubtless of Mrs. Atherton's attendance at a celebrated murder trial in the interests of a New York newspaper, must be single starred in any list. *The Valiant Runaways*, long out of print, has been republished this fall (1918). It is a story for boys, of Spanish California, with an encounter with a savage bear, a rescue from a dangerous river, capture by Indians and an escape on wild mustangs capped by a revolutionary battle! The performance may be considered a final reminder of Mrs. Atherton's versatility. No one has ever found fault with her for not being versatile!

Books by Gertrude Atherton

A Whirl Asunder, 1895. Frederick A. Stokes Company, New York. Now out of print.

Patience Sparhawk and Her Times, 1897. Stokes.

His Fortunate Grace, 1897. John Lane Company. New York. Now out of print.

American Wives and English Husbands, 1898. Dodd, Mead & Company, New York.

The Californians, 1898. Stokes.

A Daughter of the Vine, 1899. Lane.

The Valiant Runaways, 1899. Dodd, Mead.

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Senator North, 1900. Lane.
The Aristocrats, 1901. Lane.
The Conqueror, 1902. Stokes.
The Splendid Idle Forties, 1902. Stokes.
A Few of Hamilton's Letters, 1903. Stokes.
Rulers of Kings, 1904. Harper & Brothers, New York.
The Bell in the Fog, 1905. Harper.
The Travelling Thirds, 1905. Harper.
Ancestors, 1907. Harper.
The Gorgeous Isle, 1908. Doubleday, Page & Company. Not listed in their last catalogue.
Tower of Ivory, 1910. Stokes.
Julia France and Her Times, 1912. Stokes.
Perch of the Devil, 1914. Stokes.
California—An Intimate History, 1914. Harper.
Before the Gringo Came (Combining *The Doomswoman,* published in 1892, and *Rezanov,* published in 1906), 1915. Stokes.
Mrs. Balfame, 1916. Stokes.
The Living Present, 1917. Stokes.
The White Morning, 1918. Stokes.
The Avalanche, 1919. Stokes.

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CHAPTER V

MARY ROBERTS RINEHART

I AM being very frank," exclaims Mary Roberts Rinehart. As if she ever were otherwise! "I have never had any illusions about the work I do. I am, frankly, a story-teller. Some day I may be a novelist.

"I want to write life. But life is not always clean and happy. It is sometimes mean and sordid and cheap. These are the shadows that outline the novelist's picture. But I will never write anything which I cannot place in my boys' hands."

Thus Mrs. Rinehart in the *American Magazine* for October, 1917. It is almost all you need to know to understand her work. Almost, but not quite. Add this:

"I sometimes think, if I were advising a young woman as to a career, that I should say: 'First pick your husband.'"

Mary Roberts (as she was) picked hers at nineteen and was married to him nearly four months before she became twenty. That was in 1896; dates are not one of her concealments. In fact, she has no concealments, only reticences.

She was the daughter of Thomas Beveridge Roberts and Cornelia (Gilleland) Roberts of Pittsburgh, and had been a pupil of the city's public and high

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schools, then of a training school for nurses where she acquired that familiarity with hospital scenes which was necessary in writing *The Amazing Adventures of Letitia Carberry,* the stories collected under the title *Tish* and the novel *K.* And then she became the wife of Stanley Marshall Rinehart, a Pittsburgh physician. And then——

"Life was very good to me at the beginning," says Mrs. Rinehart. "It gave me a strong body, and it gave me my sons before it gave me my work. I do not know what would have happened had the work come first. But I should have had the children. I know that. I had always wanted them. Even my hospital experience, which rent the veil of life for me and showed it often terrible, could not change that fundamental thing we call the maternal instinct. . . . I would forfeit every particle of success that has come to me rather than lose any part, even the smallest, of my family life. It is on the foundation of my home that I have builded.

"Yet, for a time, it seemed that my sons were to be all I was to have out of life. From twenty to thirty I was an invalid. . . . This last summer (1917), after forty days in the saddle through unknown mountains in Montana and Washington, I was as unwearied as they were. But I paid ten years for them."

She thinks that is how she came to write. She had always wanted to. She began in 1905—she was twenty-nine that year—and worked at a "tiny" mahogany desk or upon a card table, "so low and so movable. It can sit by the fire or in a sunny window." She "learned to use a typewriter with my two fore-

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fingers, with a baby on my knee!" She wrote when the youngsters were out for a walk, asleep, playing. "It was frightfully hard. . . . I found that when I wanted to write I could not, and then when leisure came and I went to my desk, I had nothing to say."

Her first work was mainly short stories and poems. Her very first work was verse for children. Her first check was for $25, the reward of a short article telling how she had systematized the work of the household with two maids and a negro "buttons." She sold one or two of the poems for children and with a sense of guilt at the desertion of her family made a trip to New York. She made the weary rounds in one day, "a heart-breaking day, going from publisher to publisher." In two places she saw responsible persons and everywhere her verses were turned down. "But one man was very kind to me, and to that publishing house I later sent *The Circular Staircase,* my first novel. They published it and some eight other books of mine."

In her first year of sustained effort at writing, Mrs. Rinehart made about $1,200. She was surrounded by "sane people who cried me down," but who were merry without being contemptuous. Her husband has been her everlasting help. He "has stood squarely behind me, always. His belief in me, his steadiness and his sanity and his humor have kept me going, when, as has happened now and then, my little world of letters has shaken under my feet." To the three boys their mother's work has been a matter of course ever since they can remember. "I did not burst on them gloriously. I am glad to say that they think I am a much better mother than I am a writer, and that the

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family attitude in general has been attentive but not supine. They regard it exactly as a banker's family regards his bank."

Sometimes, Mrs. Rinehart, a banker's family regards his bank as a confounded nuisance! But that's when the bank takes charge of the man and demands an undue share of his time and energy. You have never let your writing do that. With you it has been family first! Most of the work of the twelve years from 1905 to 1917 which witnessed your signal success was done in your home. But sometimes when you had a long piece of work to do you felt, as you tell us, "the necessity of getting away from everything for a little while." So, beginning about 1915, you rented a room in an office building in Pittsburgh once each year while you had a novel in hand. It was barely furnished and the most significant omission was a telephone. There you got through "a surprising amount of work." And then, in 1917, you became a commuter.

Your earnings had risen from the $1,200 of that first year to $50,000 and possibly more in a twelvemonth. But let us have the story in your own words:

"My business with its various ramifications had been growing; an enormous correspondence, involving business details, foreign rights, copyrights, moving picture rights, translation rights, second serial rights, and dramatizations, had made from the small beginning of that book of poems a large and complicated business.

"I had added political and editorial writing to my other work, and also records of travel. I was quite likely to begin the day with an article opposing capital

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punishment, spend the noon hours in the Rocky Mountains, and finish off with a love story!

"I developed the mental agility of a mountain goat! Filing cases entered into my life, card index systems. To glance into my study after working hours was dismaying.

"And at last the very discerning head of the family made a stand. He said that no business man would try to sleep in his office, and yet that virtually was what I was doing."

This from a doctor, forsooth! But perhaps Dr. Rinehart never bound up a cut in the little room just off the front parlor.

Nevertheless he was right. "I am at home as soon as the small boy is, or sooner," Mrs. Rinehart proclaims. "And I am better for the change. It takes me out of the house. The short ride in the train or the motor to the city detaches me automatically from the grocery list and a frozen pipe in the garage.

"In the city I have two bright and attractive rooms. My desk is ready; my secretary is waiting. Sometimes I work all day; sometimes I look over my mail and go out to luncheon and do not come back.

"Then automatically the train or car going home detaches me from publishers and autograph hunters and pen and ink and paper. I am ready to play."

She lives in Sewickley, a suburb of Pittsburgh. The home is known as Glen Osborne. She is not an early riser. "I like to let the day break on me gradually." After breakfast there are household arrangements. She is no slave to her typewriter. "I may say that I work every week-day morning and perhaps three after-

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noons." She goes riding, plays golf, visits the dressmaker the other three. She is a member of the Equal Franchise Association and of the Juvenile Court Association. There are long vacations, but what she sees and experiences a-traveling is usually rendered to her readers. "Thus in the summer we spend weeks in the saddle in the mountains of the Far West, or fishing in Canada. . . . These outdoor summers were planned at first because there were four men and one woman in our party. Now, however, I love the open as men do." She writes about it better than many men do.

Mrs. Rinehart, in any account of herself, is certain to record the fact that she has never done newspaper work, although in recent years she has done "political and editorial writing." She was never a newspaper reporter. The "moral equivalent," as William James would have styled it, was, in her case, undoubtedly her hospital experience. Like any young nurse, she saw "life in the raw," to borrow the unoriginal but completely expressive phrase used in her novel *K*. And then she had the great fortune to marry happily and to become a mother. This is the secret of her success, and all of it. Young and impressionable, she saw what life is at its most agonizing, most horrible, most heroic moments. Still young, but with her thoroughly normal and wholesome nature losing its plasticity and taking on a definite mold, she found what life can be in its permanent and most deeply satisfying beauty. Sympathy, genuine affection and sanative humor were hers in fair measure; when they failed her momentarily her husband replenished the healing store.

Her first novel, *The Circular Staircase*, was a mys-

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tery tale; so was her second, *The Man in Lower Ten.* They appeared in 1908 and 1909 respectively. Her first play had been produced in New York in 1907. This was *Double Life,* staged at the Bijou Theater. In conjunction with her husband, she wrote *The Avenger* (1908) and much later she collaborated with Avery Hopwood in the highly successful farce *Seven Days.* This was first played at the Astor Theater, New York. In 1913, at the Harris Theater, New York, her farce *Cheer Up* was put on. "Two plays were successful," in Mrs. Rinehart's opinion.

She has written short stories for all the most popular American magazines—the *Saturday Evening Post* perhaps particularly; *McClure's, Everybody's, Collier's,* the *American* and the *Metropolitan* are others she enumerates offhand. And her short stories are among the most excellent produced by a living American writer. Some of them, unified by possession of the same principal character or characters, have been published in book form, as *Tish* and *Bab, a Sub-Deb.* The stories in *Tish* relate various escapades of an unmarried woman of advanced years, the heroine of Mrs. Rinehart's earlier novel, *The Amazing Adventures of Letitia Carberry.* Letitia Carberry, "Tish," is a person without a literary parallel. Well-to-do, excitement-loving, curious, with a passion for guiding the lives of two other maidens like herself, Lizzie and Aggie; with a nephew, Charlie Sands, who throws up hopeless hands before her unpredictable performances, Miss Carberry is unique and funny beyond easy characterization. She pokes at the carburetor with a hairpin, rides horseback in a divided skirt, puts

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great faith in blackberry cordial, shoulders a shotgun and mends the canoe with chewing gum. These things in the tales composing *Tish;* in *The Amazing Adventures of Letitia Carberry* we have a story in which the mystery of extraordinary and scandalous occurrences in a hospital where Tish is a patient is finally solved by her efforts. Nothing affords a better exhibition of Mrs. Rinehart's skill as a story-teller than this novel. Things that with less skillful handling would be both ghoulish and shocking, are so related that they strike the reader merely as bizarre or outrageously laughable, or as heightening the unguessable puzzle of what is to come. The technical triumph is very great, as great as that achieved in the last half of George M. Cohan's play, *Seven Keys to Baldpate,* where a corpse is lugged about without offending the observer. *The Amazing Adventures of Letitia Carberry* is a remarkable evidence of the lengths to which farce can be carried and remain inoffensive—and become the source of helpless mirth.

Bab, a Sub-Deb, with its account of the doings of a girl who has not yet "come out," a sub-débutante, is also unique and, to the extent of the character's capacity, just as diverting. Mrs. Rinehart does nothing by halves, she exploits the possibilities of her people to the top of their bents—and hers. She exploits—always legitimately—her own affairs, as in *My Creed,* the autobiographical article in the *American Magazine* upon which we have drawn so heavily in this sketch, and *The Altar of Freedom,* an account of her struggle to part with a son who felt he must answer America's call for men in 1917. With gusto she gives us the

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account of a vacation trip—see *Through Glacier Park* or *Tenting To-Night.* With the heaviest possible charge of sentiment but never an explosive cap of sentimentality, she puts before us a small boy, the crown prince of a mythical but completely real kingdom, whose pitifully circumscribed existence, whose scrapes and friendships and admiration of Abraham Lincoln, have for their background court intrigues and the uncovering of treason; read *Long Live the King!* With complete self-knowledge comes complete knowledge of others; Mrs. Rinehart can go straight to the American heart and does it in *The Amazing Interlude,* that story of Sara Lee Kennedy, who went from a Pennsylvania city to the Belgian front to make soup for the soldiers. Here is romance so heady and strong that most readers overlook, purposely and gladly, the improbability of Henri's return to Sara Lee and the little house of mercy after daybreak discovered him, delirious and in a Belgian uniform, dangling on the German wire. Artistically *The Amazing Interlude* excels by its portrait of Harvey, Sara Lee's fiancé back home, Harvey who resisted her "call" to service, who brought her back home, whose hard selfishness as an American and whose lack of comprehension as a man make him entirely typical of thousands in this country prior to April 6, 1917.

The novel *K.*— or story *K.*, if we accept Mrs. Rinehart's disclaimer as to novel writing—is possibly more representative of her work than any other single book. It illustrates perfectly her ingenuity in contriving and handling a plot; for the book ends on page 410 and the most necessary revelation does not come until page

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407. It exemplifies her finished gift for telling a story; there are no wasted words and in half a page she can transport you from laughter to tenderness. Half a page? On page 70 you may see it done in seven lines. The girl Sidney Page has slipped from a rock into the river, alighting on her feet and standing neck deep. Rescued by K. Le Moyne, she remarks:

"'There wasn't any danger, really, unless—unless the river had risen. . . . I dare say I shall have to be washed and ironed.'

"He drew her cautiously to her feet. Her wet skirts clung to her; her shoes were sodden and heavy. She clung to him frantically, her eyes on the river below. With the touch of her hands the man's mirth died. He held her very carefully, very tenderly, as one holds something infinitely precious."

K. shows its author's power to portray character effectively in sweeping outlines filled in, on occasion, with solid or mottled masses of color. K. himself is the kind of a person that Mary S. Watts might have put before us in some 600 closely printed pages. It is a difference of method merely and while not every one would be able to appreciate the thousand little touches with which Mrs. Watts drew her hero, Mrs. Rinehart's more vigorous delineation is effective at all distances, in all lights, with almost all readers. She manages in this tale to present a wide variety of persons and a great range of emotions and she manages it less by atmospheric details and a single setting—the Street—than by an astonishing number of relationships between a man and a woman; or, in the case of Johnny, "the Rosenfeld boy," and Joe Drummond,

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a youth and a woman or girl. It will be worth the reader's while to note that the story contains no less than ten such relationships. First there are K. and Sidney and Joe and Sidney. Then there are Max Wilson and Sidney, Max Wilson and Carlotta Harrison, Tillie and Mr. Schwitter, Christine Lorenz and Palmer Howe, Grace Irving and Palmer Howe, Grace Irving and Johnny Rosenfeld, K. and Tillie and K. and Christine. This is very complicated and unusual art—if it is not novelizing, then we do not know what novelizing is. Consider the gamut run. K. and Sidney are the ripe lovers. Joe's unrequited love for Sidney is the desperate passion of immaturity. Max Wilson's feeling for Sidney is the infatuation of a nature inherently fickle where women are concerned. Carlotta Harrison's love for Max Wilson is the dark passion. The relation between Tillie and Schwitter goes to the bedrock of human instincts, is a thing Thomas Hardy might have concerned himself with. It is pathetic; he would have made it tragic as well; we are satisfied that in her disposition of it Mrs. Rinehart is sufficiently faithful to the truth of life. Christine Lorenz and Palmer Howe are the disillusioned married; but in this case, as Christine said: "'The only difference between me and other brides is that I know what I'm getting. Most of them do not.'"

Grace Irving and Palmer Howe bring before us the man and the woman in their worst relationship in the story, or in life either. Grace Irving and Johnny Rosenfeld are a picture of thwarted motherhood and a blind feeling for justice. K. and Tillie are proofs of the reach of friendship and the efficacy of under-

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standing. K. and Christine give us the woman saved from herself.

The height—or the depth—to which Mrs. Rinehart attains in this story is a thing to marvel at, and just as marvelous is the surety with which she gets her distance. The tenth chapter of *K.* will not easily be overmatched in American fiction or that of any other country. Here is Mr. Schwitter, the nurseryman, middle-aged or older, not very articulate, with a wife in an asylum playing with paper dolls; and here is Tillie, punching meal tickets for Mrs. McKee, not becoming younger, lonelier every day, suffering heartaches and disappointment without end. Mr. Schwitter has proposed a certain thing.

"Tillie cowered against the door, her eyes on his. Here before her, embodied in this man, stood all that she had wanted and never had. He meant a home, tenderness, children, perhaps. He turned away from the look in her eyes and stared out of the front window.

" 'Them poplars out there ought to be taken away,' he said heavily. 'They're hell on sewers.' "

. . . . . .

"The total result . . . after twelve years is that I have learned to sit down at my desk and begin work simultaneously," wrote Mrs. Rinehart in 1917. "One thing died, however, in those years of readjustment and struggle. That was my belief in what is called 'inspiration.' I think I had it now and then in those days, moments when I felt things I had hardly words for, a breath of something much bigger than I was, a little lift in the veil.

"It does not come any more.

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"Other things bothered me in those first early days. I seemed to have so many things to write about, and writing was so difficult. Ideas came, but no words to clothe them. Now, when writing is easy, when the technique of my work bothers me no more than the pen I write with, I have less to say.

"I have words, but fewer ideas to clothe in them. And, coming more and more often is the feeling that, before I have commenced to do real work, I am written out; that I have for years wasted my substance in riotous writing, and that now, when my chance is here, when I have lived and adventured, when, if ever, I am to record honestly my little page of these great times in which I live, now I shall fail."

If her readers shared this feeling they must have murmured to themselves as they turned the absorbing pages of *The Amazing Interlude:* "How absurd!" It is doubtful if they recalled her spoken misgiving at all.

BOOKS BY MARY ROBERTS RINEHART

The Circular Staircase, 1908.
The Man in Lower Ten, 1909.
When a Man Marries, 1909.
The Window at the White Cat, 1910.
The Amazing Adventures of Letitia Carberry, 1911.
Where There's a Will, 1912.
The Case of Jenny Brice, 1913.
The After House, 1914.
The Street of Seven Stars, 1914.
K., 1915.
Through Glacier Park.

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Tish, 1916.
The Altar of Freedom, 1917.
Long Live the King! 1917.
Tenting To-Night, 1918.
Bab, a Sub-Deb.
Kings, Queens and Pawns, 1915.
The Amazing Interlude, 1918.

The first seven were published by the Bobbs-Merrill Company, Indianapolis; the next eight by Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston; the last three by George H. Doran Company, New York.

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CHAPTER VI

KATHLEEN NORRIS

MRS. NORRIS," explains William Dean Howells, "puts the problem, or the fact, or the trait before you by quick, vivid touches of portraiture or action. If she lacks the final touch of Frank Norris's power, she has the compensating gift of a more controlled and concentrated observation. She has the secret of closely adding detail to detail in a triumph of what another California author has called Littleism, but what seems to be nature's way of achieving Largeism."

Of course, this is the method of Kathleen Norris, the method in her madness, to use the word madness in its old sense of being possessed by something. What is Mrs. Norris possessed by? Why, the irresistible impulse to put things before you and make you consider whether they should be so. H'm, a preacher might do that. Well, had most preachers the presentative skill of Kathleen Norris there would be ticket speculators on the sidewalks in front of their tabernacles!

If you want to make people think write a novel—but be sure you know how! Mrs. Norris does. Why, is easily answered. She was not a newspaper reporter for nothing. Newspaper training does inculcate "a taste exact for faultless fact" that "amounts

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to a disease," quite as the lilting lines in *The Mikado* have it. The fiction of Kathleen Norris is distinguished by several unusual qualities, all due, in the present writer's opinion, to newspaper training operating upon a gifted and observant mind:

As in a good piece of reporting, a single important idea or fact or problem is at the bottom of each of her novels.

Each story is first of all a story, the crisp, penetrative account of certain persons and events.

Mrs. Norris never appears to have taken her fact or idea or problem and said, "I will build a tale about this." She seems always to be describing actual people and actual occurrences. This seeming may be deceptive. It may be that she goes about it the other way, proceeding from her idea to her people and incidents. If she does, the trail is covered perfectly. For the reader gets the sensation first of persons and "doings" and then, later, of problems arising from their relations to each other; which is the precise and invariable effect life itself always gives us. We do not think of the problem of divorce first and of our neighbors, John Doe and Cora Doe, afterward; we see Cora Doe going past the house and recall when John Doe was last in town and then, and not until then, do we think of the tragedy of their lives and the dreadful question mark coiled in the center of it.

In other words, life assimilates all its great facts and problems and the novelist who would set them forth effectively must first have assimilated them too, so that they will not have to be "brought in" the story he is telling, but will be in it from the beginning, dis-

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closing themselves as the action develops. The reader must feel that he has *discovered* the fact or the problem for himself, that he, all by himself, has abstracted it out of the scenes put before him. He must see Cora Doe go by and hear of John Doe's last appearance and look upon the wreck of their lives—but all the rest must be left to him to grasp unaided! The real reason why no story can have a moral is that every reader must find his own moral, even if each finds the same one!

Mrs. Norris understands this and practices it. She does not ask you to consider whether a girl, bred in sordid surroundings and having access in youth only to tawdry ideals, can lift herself to gentleness and dignity and become, at any cost, the captain of her soul. No! She makes you acquainted with Julia Page. She refrains from questioning the efficacy of divorce and writes *The Heart of Rachael,* which makes every reader ask himself the question. If her readers unite in an identical answer and that answer is the one Mrs. Norris herself would return, does that convict her of stepping outside the novelist's province? Bless you, no; the novelist's province is as large as life is, and its boundaries in the case of any given writer as far as he can carry and maintain them. Mrs. Norris's frontiers are wide.

The woman first. An interesting article in the *Book News Monthly* several years ago posited that "Kathleen Norris upsets all our accepted ideas of how a novelist is made. . . . With the exception of five months spent in taking a literary course at the University of California, Mrs. Norris never had any

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schooling, and, until five years ago (1908), she never had been outside her native State. . . . No thrilling adventures, no prairie life, or mountaineering, no experiences of travel, or residence in Paris or Berlin, have been hers." The impression of wonder which this may create will be somewhat modified by the sketch of her life which follows, and for which we are chiefly indebted to the same article.

Kathleen Norris was the daughter of James A. Thompson, of San Francisco. The father was a San Franciscan of long residence and twice served as president of the famous Bohemian Club. At the time of his death he was manager of the Donohoe-Kelly Bank. Kathleen was the second child in a family of six—three boys and three girls. Mr. Thompson would not send his children to school and they were taught at home, with an occasional governess for language study. In 1899 the family moved to Mill Valley across San Francisco Bay, and "Treehaven," a bungalow in the beautiful valley at the foot of Mount Tamalpais, became the home. A quieter life can hardly be imagined. There weren't many neighbors, the children did not go to school, most of the visitors were grown people, there were no children's parties. Kathleen Norris never saw the inside of a theater until she was sixteen, which will astonish readers of *The Story of Julia Page.* There was, however, a large library, there were plenty of magazines, there were miles of forest as a playground, there were horses, cows, dogs, cats, a garden. Mountains were there to be climbed and creeks to be waded. "The boys as well as the girls of the family all became practical cooks."

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Kathleen was the oldest girl. At nineteen she was to "come out" in San Francisco. A house had been taken in the city for the winter. Gowns had been ordered and "the cotillions joined" when Mrs. Thompson was stricken with pneumonia and died. Her husband died, broken-hearted, in less than a month afterward. Misfortunes culminating just after the father's death left the six children "destitute, with the exception of the family home in Mill Valley, too large and too far from the city to be a negotiable asset."

The children had never known what it was to want money. They behaved bravely. The oldest boy already had a small job. Kathleen got work at once with a hardware house at $30 a month. Her 15-year-old sister took three pupils "whose fees barely paid for her commutation ticket and carfares. The total of the little family's income was about $80 a month. Their one terror—never realized—was of debt."

Kathleen and her sister came home from the day's work to get the dinner, make beds, wash dishes and scrub the kitchen floor at midnight. Kathleen, who had been a favorite story-teller all her life, began to wonder if she could not make money by writing. Her tales as a child had generally been illustrated with little pen drawings of girls with pigtails, girls in checkered aprons, girls in fancy dress, "and occasionally with more tragic pictures, such as widows and bereaved mothers mourning beside their departed. . . . There is a scrapbook in the family in which are pasted more than 1,000 of these sketches." Now she was not thinking of illustrating stories, her own or others', but of making needed money. In the fall of 1903 she had

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attempted to take a year's course in the English department of the University of California and had had to give it up because the family needed her. In 1904, at the age of twenty-three, she made her first successful effort. The San Francisco *Argonaut* paid her $15.50 for a story called *The Colonel and the Lady.* Mrs. Norris was then librarian in the Mechanics' Library and had more time to try writing. Such success as she had was not very encouraging. She left the library to go into settlement work, and for several months strove "to reanimate an already defunct settlement house." She got her feet on the right path at last by becoming society editor of the San Francisco *Evening Bulletin.* A few months later she became a reporter for the San Francisco *Call,* where she worked for two years.

"Mrs. Norris doesn't know whether the newspaper experience helped or hindered her in her literary work." There need be no uncertainty, we should think, when, as we are told in the next breath, "during these years she saw many phases of life that must have enlarged her vision and made her more catholic in her views." She learned to write with speed. "During the visit of the Atlantic fleet to Pacific waters, in 1908, there was one day in which 8,000 words were Mrs. Norris's contribution to the paper." This may explain why she is one of the most prolific of American novelists. Long before *Josselyn's Wife* could be brought out in the fall of 1918, *Sisters* had begun to be published serially.

In April, 1909, Kathleen Thompson was married to Charles Gilman Norris, younger brother of Frank

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Norris, the author of *McTeague* and *The Pit*. Charles Norris, now Capt. Charles Norris, U. S. A., is himself a novelist, the author of *The Amateur* and *Salt: The Education of Griffith Adams*. Captain and Mrs. Norris, whose home is at Port Washington, Long Island, New York, have a son named after his distinguished uncle, Frank Norris.

Marriage, a home in New York City, and the first leisure since her father's death; a literary atmosphere (her husband was in magazine editorial work), and the happiness of being in the city she had for years longed to know—these are the circumstances which reawakened Mrs. Norris's ambition to write. She essayed again without encouragement from editors except the editor at the breakfast table. Her newspaper training now seemed to handicap her, "her fiction lacked the simplicity and the appeal that have since endeared it to so many readers." For months she got nothing but rejections. Finally this note popped out of the mail:

"Dear Mrs. Norris:

"The readers report that, delightful as this story is, it is 'not quite in our tone.' The feeling of the *Atlantic* is, that when a tale is as intimately true to life as this is of yours, the tone is surely a tone for the *Atlantic* to adopt.

"It gives us much pleasure to accept so admirable a story.

"Very truly yours,
"THE EDITOR."

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The story that was "not quite in our tone" but that so impressed Ellery Sedgwick, editor of the *Atlantic Monthly,* was *What Happened to Alanna.* On its publication S. S. McClure wrote to Mrs. Norris asking for her next work. She replied, giving him the date on which *What Happened to Alanna* had been submitted to *McClure's Magazine* and the date on which it had been returned to her.

Her next six stories appeared in *McClure's.* After that it seemed to the casual observer as if they were everywhere. In one month Mrs. Norris was on five tables of contents.

And then the *Delineator* offered a prize for a story of not more than 3,000 words. Mrs. Norris began one, and when she saw that it would run to 10,000 words, she laid it aside and wrote another. So the *Delineator* lost and the *American Magazine* gained *Mother.* On the story's appearance five publishers asked Mrs. Norris to enlarge it sufficiently to make a book.

Enlarging short stories into novels is a ticklish business. Successes are few. Mrs. Norris added 20,000 words to her short story. How well she did it is evidenced by the dozens of editions through which the book has run and more remarkably by the fact that Edward Bok, editor of the *Ladies' Home Journal,* paid a high price for the privilege of running the novel as a serial *after* its publication as a book. This is apparently a unique instance.

Mother was followed by *The Rich Mrs. Burgoyne,* the story of a great-hearted woman who brought her fresh and honest ideals into the heart of a narrow

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Western city. Those who read it may excusably gasp to hear that it was written in six weeks on an order from the *Woman's Home Companion. Poor Dear Margaret Kirby,* collected short stories, was the third book, appearing in the spring of 1913. *The Treasure* had had serial publication in the *Saturday Evening Post. Saturday's Child* preceded it. And then Mrs. Norris made her first great success with a full length novel which many will consider the biggest book she has done. It was *The Story of Julia Page,* the first of three novels which have been called Mrs. Norris's trilogy of American womanhood. The others are *The Heart of Rachael* and *Martie, the Unconquered.* Between these last two appeared her short novel, *Undertow,* dealing with two young married spendthrifts. *Josselyn's Wife,* "the story of a woman's faith," tells of a sweet, simple girl, Ellen Latimer, transported by a whirlwind marriage to Gibbs Josselyn from the humdrum existence of a small country town to the luxuries of the wealthy social life of New York. There is a time when the young second wife of Gibbs Josselyn's father threatens to break up the happiness of the younger Josselyn and Ellen, for Gibbs succumbs readily to her undeniable fascination. Then comes the crash. Through the long agony of a murder trial it is the wife he has neglected who alone upholds him. It is her faith that wins and that brings him at last to an understanding of his egotistical folly.

Mrs. Norris is not yet at the height and fullness of her powers, as well as can be judged contemporaneously. It is easy enough to look back on the completed work of a writer's lifetime and say, "Here he

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reached his apex, here he began to decline, here he rose again for an hour." But to estimate the present and relate it tentatively to the future is very much harder. *Mother* was one "peak" in the graph of Mrs. Norris's progress, *The Story of Julia Page* was another and a higher, *Josselyn's Wife* is at least as high. There is every prospect that in the active and happy years we may hope are ahead of her, Kathleen Norris will excel the impressive novels she has already given us.

Books by Kathleen Norris

Mother, 1911.
The Rich Mrs. Burgoyne, 1912.
Poor Dear Margaret Kirby, 1913.
Saturday's Child, 1914.
The Treasure, 1915.
The Story of Julia Page, 1915.
The Heart of Rachael, 1916.
Undertow, 1917.
Martie, the Unconquered, 1917.
Josselyn's Wife, 1918.

These novels by Mrs. Norris are published by Doubleday, Page & Company, New York.

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CHAPTER VII

MARGARET DELAND

EDITH WHARTON, at 56, does a work of mercy in France; Margaret Deland is similarly engaged at 61. That speaks so much more loudly than their books. And their books are not silent.

If the band of a kiltie regiment plays *The Campbells Are Coming,* one of them may be Margaretta Wade (Campbell) Deland. Mrs. Deland was born in Alleghany, Pennsylvania, February 23, 1857. Her parents died while she was very young, and she was reared in the family of an uncle, Benjamin Campbell, who lived in Manchester, then a suburb of Alleghany, and the original Old Chester of Mrs. Deland's famous and loved stories.

"Our home," Mrs. Deland once wrote, "was a great, old-fashioned country house, built by English people among the hills of western Pennsylvania more than a century ago. There was a stiff, prim garden, with box hedges and closely clipped evergreens. In front of the garden were terraces, and then meadows stretching down to the Ohio River, which bent like a shining arm about the circle of the western hills."

"Which bent like a shining arm about the circle of the western hills!" Beautiful simile!

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In this old garden the little girl played the greater part of her waking hours. She loved the outdoors. She was highly impressionable and imaginative. She had the curious and dear convictions of childhood. She was sure that the whole of Asia was a yellow land, because the map of Asia in her old dog-eared geography was colored yellow.

Her first taste in reading was formed upon *Ivanhoe* and *The Talisman* and *Tales of a Grandfather,* Hawthorne's stories, and the works of Washington Irving. Her first and indeed her final experience of life was that summed up in Stevenson's saying: "And the greatest adventures are not those we go to seek." Mrs. Deland expressed it this way: "Not the prominent events; nor the catastrophes, nor the very great pleasures; not the journeys nor the deprivations, but the commonplaces of everyday life determine what a child shall do, and still more positively determine what he shall be."

In one word: character. And it is with character almost solely that Mrs. Deland as a writer has been preoccupied. Dr. Lavendar is a study in character, so is Helena Richie, so is the Iron Woman; and the young people that surround her are character studies of a completeness unexcelled in American fiction.

There is more than one way of dealing with character in fiction. But first we must settle what we mean by character. We mean, concisely, inherited traits as affected by environment. Environment includes people as well as things.

It is impossible to make a character study convincing without taking heredity into account, and this

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irrespective of whether heredity or environment plays the greater rôle in a mortal's life. The eternal controversy as to which of these two influences is preponderant is largely futile because the preponderance differs with various persons, differs with the traits inherited, differs with a thousand differing pressures of circumstance. One thing is certain: whether anything is known about an individual's inherited endowment or not we always and inescapably assume that he has one. The best handy illustration of this is Jennie Cushing in Mary S. Watts's book, *The Rise of Jennie Cushing*. Nothing whatever is known by us regarding Jennie Cushing's inheritance; we don't know her parentage any more than she does. Her environment we know with awful exactitude and we are perfectly conscious that it fails utterly to explain her except, of course, her marvelous and painfully acquired gift of reticence. We are forced, therefore, to presuppose in her case an inheritance of extraordinary will-power and extraordinary sensitiveness to beauty in any of its forms. And we do presuppose it! It makes her wholly credible; more credible, probably, than any careful account of her forebears could have made her.

Now in *The Iron Woman*, indisputably Mrs. Deland's finest story, we get both heredity and environment exactly known and precisely compounded. Indeed, if Mrs. Deland's great novel has a fault it is the fault of giving us more knowledge than should be ours. Her people are so complete that there is no unknown quantity in the equation they make. It is just a trifle too good to be true, too life-like to be convincing. Knowing to the last inch what they are (as

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we know our neighbors of long standing) we know to the last degree what they will do, under what circumstances they will do it, how they will do it and what the result upon them and upon others, just as minutely known, will be. To see Sarah Maitland and the boy Blair is like watching a terrible and inevitable and perfectly anticipated tragedy approaching in the house next door. Listen:

"But after a breathless six months of partnership—in business, if in nothing else—Herbert Maitland, leaving behind him his little two-year-old Nannie, and an unborn boy of whose approaching advent he was ignorant, got out of the world as expeditiously as consumption could take him. Indeed, his wife had so jostled him and deafened him and dazed him that there was nothing for him to do but die—so that there might be room for her expanding energy. Yet she loved him; nobody who saw her in those first silent, agonized months could doubt that she loved him. Her pain expressed itself, not in moans or tears or physical prostration, but in work. Work, which had been an interest, became a refuge. Under like circumstances some people take to religion and some to drink; as Mrs. Maitland's religion had never been more than church-going and contributions to foreign missions, it was, of course, no help under the strain of grief; and as her temperament did not dictate the other means of consolation, she turned to work. She worked herself numb; very likely she had hours when she did not feel her loss. But she did not feel anything else. Not even her baby's little clinging hands, or his milky lips at her breast. She did her duty by

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him; she hired a reliable woman to take charge of him, and she was careful to appear at regular hours to nurse him. She ordered toys for him, and as she shared the naïve conviction of her day that church-going and religion were synonymous, she began, when he was four years old, to take him to church. In her shiny, shabby black silk, which had been her Sunday costume ever since it had been purchased as part of her curiously limited trousseau, she sat in a front pew, between the two children, and felt that she was doing her duty to both of them. A sense of duty without maternal instinct is not, perhaps, as baleful a thing as maternal instinct without a sense of duty, but it is sterile; and in the first few years of her bereavement, the big, suffering woman seemed to have nothing but duty to offer to her child. Nannie's puzzles began then. 'Why don't Mamma hug my baby brother?' she used to ask the nurse, who had no explanation to offer. The baby brother was ready enough to hug Nannie, and his eager, wet little kisses on her rosy cheeks sealed her to his service while he was still in petticoats.

"Blair was three years old before, under the long atrophy of grief, Sarah Maitland's maternal instinct began to stir. When it did, she was chilled by the boy's shrinking from her as if from a stranger; she was chilled, too, by another sort of repulsion, which with the hideous candor of childhood he made no effort to conceal. One of his first expressions of opinion had been contained in the single word 'uggy,' accompanied by a finger pointed at his mother. Whenever she sneezed—and she was one of those people who cannot, or do not, moderate a sneeze—Blair had

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a nervous paroxysm. He would jump at the unexpected sound, then burst into furious tears. When she tried to draw his head down upon her scratchy black alpaca breast, he would say violently, 'No, no! No, no!' at which she would push him roughly from her knee and fall into hurt silence. . . . She took Blair's little chin in her hand—a big, beautiful, powerful hand, with broken and blackened nails—and turning his wincing face up, rubbed her cheek roughly against his. 'Get over your airs!' she said."

It is, we repeat, exactly like living next door to the family and, with the procession of the years, collecting innumerable little incidents and observed facts all piecing accurately together. It is not fiction at all, it is biography, the best and brightest and most instructive kind of biography. What is the difference between fiction and biography? Principally it consists only in this, that in the case of the life of an actual man the biographer is under no necessity of explaining or reconciling his apparent contradictions. We know the man lived and that he was capable of those contradictions. If the biographer can reconcile or explain them, offering an acceptable and plausible theory to account for them, very well; we are grateful. But it is not imperative that he should do so; what is imperative is that he should set down a faithful record of the contradictions themselves; for we can then, having the evidence before us, frame our own theories to account for them.

In writing fiction or fictional biography the author's main struggle is for plausibility. If his character does perplexing and contradictory things the author feels

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that he must make them entirely understandable or we will not accept the character—and in this he is generally right. Human nature is human nature; what we take at the hands of life we are forced to take and make the best of; but we won't take the same things from a novel because we aren't compelled to. We insist that the novelist make everything clear and under this great compulsion the novelist is always working. The result is not always happy. Compulsions, however desirable in general, remain laws of force. Compulsory education—compulsory fiction; there are cases where both work badly, where both do serious ill.

Considered as fiction, *The Iron Woman* is vitiated ever so slightly by the painful consciousness that we have required every person in it to be explained to us too fully, a requirement to which Mrs. Deland has obediently conformed. No mystery, no magic of the unknown, invests the story. We have only to watch these people take their appointed courses to an appointed end. We read eagerly and with a sense of uncertainty *not* as to what the outcome will be, but as to whether Mrs. Deland will dare, *will dare,* to break the law of the fictioneer. She does not, and thereby throws her book over into the field of biography. What, you say, did these people actually live? Of course they lived. If you mean, were there originals for all of them? we cannot say. Probably there were. But you must remember that the novelist who works from an original, a living person, hardly ever takes that person as he is. Usually some addition and subtraction goes on. Without doubt this was the case here. When we speak of *The Iron Woman* as biog-

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raphy, the best and brightest of biography, we mean simply this: The studies of the people in it are too minute for fiction and the people themselves are over-plausible. The writer's effort to make them plausible has gone so far and been so successful as to defeat her end. The wealth of detail with which she enriches her splendid story makes it a biography, or a cluster of biographies; and considered as biographies, these people are a vivid success, and all that extreme plausibility we have noted, all that conscientious dovetailing of traits and circumstance, falls lightly and easily and beautifully into place as the brilliant and convincing effort of a biographer to explain her people, reconcile their self-contradictions, put them in the right light before the world, in the light in which they saw themselves and in which they saw each other.

We are not trying to be ingenious nor to find in Mrs. Deland's work something which is not there. We have no patience with artificiality in dealing with these matters. We are simply trying to account for the feeling that sweeps over us as we re-read *The Iron Woman,* a feeling which we believe most of those who re-read the book will share. And we venture to think that in this attempt to solve our feeling about Mrs. Deland's biggest novel we have solved the peculiarity of all her exquisite work. She is the ideal biographer. As supporting evidence to the case we have made (we hope it is a decent case) we call attention to her Old Chester books and stories. In *The Awakening of Helena Richie,* in *Old Chester Tales,* in *Dr. Lavendar's People*—in them all, in all her work—we believe that

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the reader who takes the biographical standpoint will find the fullest satisfaction. It will be a full satisfaction indeed. Mrs. Deland is one of the ablest writers America has produced so far. We will allow her to be a genius if genius is, after all, merely the capacity for taking infinite pains and exhibiting an infinite comprehension of and sympathy with simple and memorable lives.

BOOKS BY MARGARET DELAND

Good for the Soul.
The Rising Tide.
R. J.'s Mother.
The Way to Peace.
Where the Laborers Are Few.
John Ward, Preacher.
The Old Garden and Other Verses.
Philip and His Wife.
Florida Days.
Sidney.
The Story of a Child.
The Wisdom of Fools.
Mr. Tommy Dove and Other Stories.
Old Chester Tales.
Dr. Lavendar's People.
The Common Way, 1904.
The Awakening of Helena Richie, 1906.
An Encore, 1907.
The Iron Woman, 1911.
The Voice, 1912.

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Partners, 1913.
The Hands of Esau, 1914.
Around Old Chester, 1915.

Published by Harper & Brothers, New York.

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CHAPTER VIII

GENE STRATTON-PORTER

BECAUSE Gene Stratton-Porter cares for the truth that is in her, she is the most widely read and most widely loved author in America today, with the probable exception of Harold Bell Wright. She is absolutely sincere in all her work, she is in dead earnest, she does not care primarily for money, but for certain ideas and ideals. Let no one underestimate the tremendous power that is hers because of these things, let no one underestimate her hold upon millions of readers; let none undervalue the influence she has exerted and continues to exert, an influence always for good, for clean living, for manly men, for womanly women, for love of nature, for sane and reasonable human hopes and aspirations, for honest affection, for wholesome laughter, for a healthy emotionalism as the basis and justification of humble and invaluable lives.

If Mrs. Porter has egoism it is the sort of egoism that the world needs. It is nothing more or less than a firm and sustaining belief in one's self, in the worth of one's work, and is bred of a passionate conviction that you must always give the best of yourself without stint. Is it egoistical to believe that? Is it self-centeredness to be proud of that? Is it wrong, having

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set the world the best example of which you are capable, to call it to the world's attention? You will not get the present reporter to say so! You will get from him nothing but an expression of his own conviction that while literature, æsthetically viewed, may not have been enriched by Mrs. Porter's writings, thousands, yes, tens of thousands of men and women have been made happier and better by her stories. And that just about sweeps any other possible accomplishment into limbo!

The secret of Mrs. Porter's success is sincerity, complete sincerity; doing one's best work and doing it to the top of one's bent. It is not a question of art. There is no art about it. The finest literary artist in the world could not duplicate her performance unless he were a duplicate of *her*. It's not a literary matter at all; the thing has its roots in the personality, in the mind and heart and nervous organization of the writer. If you could be a Gene Stratton-Porter you could write the novels she writes and achieve just the success she achieves, a success which is improperly measured by earnings of $500,000 to $750,000 from her books, a success of which the true measure can never be taken because it is a success in human lives and not in dollars.

The best evidence of this—for there will be doubters—is the story of her life, very largely told in her own words, published in a booklet by Doubleday, Page & Company in 1915. The booklet, for some time to be had on request, is now out of print. In what follows it is drawn upon freely and almost to the exclusion of anything else.

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"Mark Stratton, the father of Gene Stratton-Porter, described his wife, at the time of their marriage, as a 'ninety-pound bit of pink porcelain, pink as a wild rose, plump as a partridge, having a big rope of bright brown hair, never ill a day in her life, and bearing the loveliest name ever given a woman—Mary.' He further added that 'God fashioned her heart to be gracious, her body to be the mother of children, and as her especial gift of Grace, he put Flower Magic into her fingers.' "

There were twelve children. Mrs. Stratton was "a wonderful mother." She kept an immaculate house, set a famous table, hospitably received all who came to her door, made her children's clothing. Her great gift was making things grow. "She started dainty little vines and climbing plants from tiny seeds she found in rice and coffee. Rooted things she soaked in water, rolled in fine sand, planted according to habit, and they almost never failed to justify her expectations. She even grew trees and shrubs from slips and cuttings no one else would have thought of trying to cultivate, her last resort being to cut a slip diagonally, insert the lower end in a small potato, and plant as if rooted. And it nearly always grew!"

She was of Dutch extraction and "worked her special magic with bulbs, which she favored above other flowers. Tulips, daffodils, star flowers, lilies, dahlias, little bright hyacinths, that she called 'blue bells,' she dearly loved. From these she distilled exquisite perfume by putting clusters at time of perfect bloom in bowls lined with freshly made, unsalted butter, covering them closely, and cutting the few drops of extract

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thus obtained with alcohol. 'She could do more different things,' says the author, 'and finish them all in a greater degree of perfection, than any other woman I have ever known. If I were limited to one adjective in describing her, "capable" would be the word.' "

Mark Stratton was of English blood, a descendant of that first Mark Stratton of New York, who married the beauty, Anne Hutchinson. He was of the English family of which the Earl of Northbrooke is the present head. He was tenacious, had clear-cut ideas, could not be influenced against his better judgment. "He believed in God, in courtesy, in honor, and cleanliness, in beauty, and in education. He used to say that he would rather see a child of his the author of a book of which he could be proud, than on the throne of England, which was the strongest way he knew to express himself. His very first earnings he spent for a book; when other men rested, he read; all his life he was a student of extraordinarily tenacious memory. He especially loved history: Rollands, Wilson's *Outlines,* Hume, Macaulay, Gibbon, Prescott, and Bancroft, he could quote from all of them paragraphs at a time, contrasting the views of different writers on a given event, and remembering dates with unfailing accuracy." The Bible he knew by heart, except for the Old Testament pedigrees. This is a literal statement of fact. He traveled miles to deliver sermons, lectures, talks. He worshiped humanity and all outdoors. Color was a prime delight. " 'He had a streak of genius in his makeup, the genius of large apprecia-

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tion,'" says Mrs. Porter. He reveled in descriptions of personal bravery.

"To this mother at forty-six, and this father at fifty, each at intellectual top-notch, every faculty having been stirred for years by the dire stress of civil war, and the period immediately following, the author was born," on a farm in Wabash county, Indiana, in 1868. "From childhood she recalls 'thinking things which she felt should be saved,' and frequently tugging at her mother's skirts and begging her to 'set down' what the child considered stories and poems. Most of these were some big fact in nature that thrilled her, usually expressed in Biblical terms."

The farm was called "Hopewell," after the home of some of Mark Stratton's ancestors. Mark Stratton and his wife had spent twenty-five years beautifying it. The land was rolling, with springs and streams and plenty of remaining forest. The roads were smooth, the house and barn commodious; the family "rode abroad in a double carriage trimmed in patent leather, drawn by a matched team of gray horses, and sometimes the father 'speeded a little' for the delight of the children."

The girl had an invalid mother, for about the time when Gene could first remember things Mrs. Stratton contracted typhoid after nursing three of her children through it. She never recovered her health. The youngest child was therefore allowed to follow her father and brothers afield "and when tired out slept on their coats in fence corners, often awaking with shy creatures peering into her face. She wandered where she pleased, amusing herself with birds, flowers,

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insects and plays she invented. 'By the day I trotted from one object which attracted me to another, singing a little song of made-up phrases about everything I saw while I waded catching fish, chasing butterflies over clover fields, or following a bird with a hair in its beak; much of the time I carried the inevitable baby for a woman-child, frequently improvised from an ear of corn in the silk, wrapped in catalpa leaf blankets.

" 'I stepped lightly, made no noise, and watched until I knew what a mother bird fed her young before I began dropping bugs, worms, crumbs, and fruit into little red mouths that opened at my tap on the nest quite as readily as at the touch of the feet of the mother bird. . . . I fed butterflies sweetened water and rose leaves inside the screen of a cellar window, doctored all the sick and wounded birds and animals the men brought me from afield; made pets of the baby squirrels and rabbits they carried in for my amusement; collected wild flowers; and as I grew older, gathered arrow points and goose quills for sale in Fort Wayne. So I had the first money I ever earned.' "

At school Mrs. Porter hated mathematics. Once when a mathematical topic for an essay was forced upon her, she broke loose and read the class a review of Saintine's *Picciola,* the story of an imprisoned nobleman and a tiny flower that blossomed within prison walls. She fascinated her audience.

" 'The most that can be said of what education I have is that it is the very best kind in the world for me; the only possible kind that would not ruin a person of my inclinations. The others of my family had

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been to college; I always have been too thankful for words that circumstances intervened which saved my brain from being run through a groove in company with dozens of others of widely different tastes and mentality.' " Her father encouraged her in writing, and when she wanted to do something in color had an easel built for her. On it she afterward painted the water colors for *Moths of the Limberlost.* If she wanted to try music he paid for lessons for her. " 'It was he who demanded a physical standard that developed strength to endure the rigors of scientific field and darkroom work, and the building of ten books in five years, five of which were on nature subjects, having my own illustrations, and five novels, literally teeming with natural history, true to nature. . . . It was he who daily lived before me the life of exactly such a man as I portrayed in *The Harvester,* and who constantly used every atom of brain and body power to help and to encourage all men to do the same.' "

In 1886, at eighteen, Gene Stratton was married to Charles Darwin Porter. A daughter was born to them, but the fever to write was merely in abeyance for a while. "It dominated the life she lived, the cabin she designed for their home, and the books she read. When her daughter was old enough to go to school, Mrs. Porter's time came."

She explains: " 'I could not afford a maid, but I was very strong, vital to the marrow, and I knew how to manage life to make it meet my needs, thanks to even the small amount I had seen of my mother. I kept a cabin of fourteen rooms, and kept it immaculate. I made most of my daughter's clothes, I

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kept a conservatory in which there bloomed from three to six hundred bulbs every winter, tended a house of canaries and linnets, and cooked and washed dishes besides three times a day. In my spare time (mark the word, there was time to spare else the books never would have been written and the pictures made) I mastered photography to such a degree that the manufacturers of one of our finest brands of print paper once sent the manager of their factory to me to learn how I handled it. He frankly said that they could obtain no such results with it as I did. He wanted to see my darkroom, examine my paraphernalia, and have me tell him exactly how I worked. As I was using the family bathroom for a darkroom and washing negatives and prints on turkey platters in the kitchen sink, I was rather put to it when it came to giving an exhibition.' . . .

"She began by sending photographic and natural history hints to *Recreation,* and with the first installment was asked to take charge of the department and furnish material each month, for which she was to be paid at current prices in high-grade photographic material. We can form some idea of the work she did under this arrangement from the fact that she had over $1,000 worth of equipment at the end of the first year. The second year she increased this by $500, and then accepted a place on the natural history staff of *Outing,* working closely with Mr. Caspar Whitney. After a year of this helpful experience, Mrs. Porter began to turn her attention to what she calls 'nature studies sugar-coated with fiction.' Mixing some childhood fact with a large degree of grown-up

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fiction, she wrote a little story entitled *Laddie, the Princess, and the Pie.*"

She dreaded failure, she who had been bred to believe that failure was disgraceful. "'I who waded morass, fought quicksands, crept, worked from ladders high in the air, and crossed water on improvised rafts without a tremor, slipped with many misgivings into the postoffice and rented a box for myself, so that if I met with failure my husband and the men in the bank need not know what I had attempted.'"

That was in May; in September the storekeeper congratulated her on her story in the *Metropolitan.* She had not seen it. She wrote to the editor and got a quick reply. An office boy had lost or destroyed her address and he had been waiting to hear from her. Would she do a Christmas story?

She would, and did, and he asked for illustrations. She found that his time limit gave her one day to do them in. She worked from 8 A. M. to 4 A. M. to make the necessary photographs, which required special settings and costuming.

Not long after, Mrs. Porter wrote a short story of 10,000 words and sent it to the *Century.* Richard Watson Gilder advised her to make a book of it. This is the origin of *The Song of the Cardinal.* "Following Mr. Gilder's advice, she recast the tale and, starting with the mangled body of a cardinal some marksman had left in the road she was traveling, in a fervor of love for the birds and indignation at the hunter she told the cardinal's life history." The book was published in 1903.

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She illustrated the book herself after dangers and hardships of which the reader seldom has any conception. Securing a mere tailpiece picture once cost her three weeks in bed where she lay twisted in convulsions and insensible most of the time.

Freckles appeared in the fall of 1904. She had been spending every other day for three months in the Limberlost swamp, making a series of studies of the nest of a black vulture. She combined two men to make McLean of the story, but Sarah Duncan was a real woman; Freckles was a composite of certain ideals and her own field experiences, merged with those of a friend. For the Angel she idealized her own daughter. The book is dedicated to her husband, because he helped make it possible. She had promised him not to work in the Limberlost. "'There were most excellent reasons why I should not go there. Much of it was impenetrable. Only a few trees had been taken out; oilmen were just invading it. In its physical aspect it was a treacherous swamp and quagmire filled with every plant, animal and human danger known in the worst of such locations in the Central States.'" Nevertheless lumbermen had brought word of the vulture's nest. "'I hastened to tell my husband the wonderful story of the big black bird, the downy white baby, the pale blue egg.'" So he said he would go with her.

It was awful.

"'A rod inside the swamp on a road leading to an oil well we mired to the carriage hubs. I shielded my camera in my arms and before we reached the well I thought the conveyance would be torn to pieces and

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the horse stalled. At the well we started on foot, Mr. Porter in kneeboots, I in waist-high waders. The time was late June; we forced our way between steaming, fetid pools, through swarms of gnats, flies, mosquitoes, poisonous insects, keeping a sharp watch for rattlesnakes. We sank ankle deep at every step and logs we thought solid broke under us. Our progress was a steady succession of pulling and prying each other to the surface. Our clothing was wringing wet, and the exposed parts of our bodies lumpy with bites and stings. My husband found the tree, cleared the opening to the great prostrate log, traversed its unspeakable odors for nearly forty feet to its farthest recess, and brought the baby and egg to the light in his leaf-lined hat.

" 'We could endure the location only by dipping napkins in deodorant and binding them over our mouths and nostrils. Every third day for almost three months we made this trip, until Little Chicken was able to take wing.' "

The story itself—*Freckles*—originated in the fact that one day, while leaving the swamp, a big feather with a shaft over twenty inches long came spinning and swirling earthward and fell in the author's path. It was an eagle's, but Mrs. Porter had been doing vultures, so a vulture's it became.

Freckles took three years to find its audience. The marginal illustrations made people think it purely a nature book. The news that it was a novel of the kind you simply must read had to get about by word of mouth. The copy that lies beside us as we write this sketch was printed in 1914, ten years after the story's

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first appearance. The jacket says that by 1914 exactly 670,733 copies had been sold. And the most important three of the ten years were largely wasted!

Publishers told Mrs. Porter then and afterward, repeatedly and emphatically, that if she wanted to sell her best and make the most money she must cut out the nature stuff. But, as she says, her real reason in writing her novels was to bring natural history attractively before the people who wouldn't touch it in its pure state.

"'I had had one year's experience with *The Song of the Cardinal,* frankly a nature book, and from the start I realized that I never could reach the audience I wanted with a book on nature alone. To spend time writing a book based wholly upon human passion and its outworking I would not. So I compromised on a book into which I put all the nature work that came naturally within its scope, and seasoned it with little bits of imagination and straight copy from the lives of men and women I had known intimately, folk who lived in a simple, common way with which I was familiar. So I said to my publishers: "I will write the books exactly as they take shape in my mind. You publish them. I know they will sell enough that you will not lose. If I do not make over $600 on a book I shall never utter a complaint. Make up my work as I think it should be and leave it to the people as to what kind of book they will take into their hearts and homes." I altered *Freckles* slightly, but from that time on we worked on this agreement.

"'My years of nature work have not been without considerable insight into human nature, as well,' con-

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tinues Mrs. Porter. 'I know its failings, its inborn tendencies, its weaknesses, its failures, its depth of crime; and the people who feel called upon to spend their time analyzing, digging into, and uncovering these sources of depravity have that privilege, more's the pity! If I had my way about it, this is a privilege no one could have in books intended for indiscriminate circulation. I stand squarely for book censorship, and I firmly believe that with a few more years of such books as half a dozen I could mention, public opinion will demand this very thing. My life has been fortunate in one glad way: I have lived mostly in the country and worked in the woods. For every bad man and woman I have ever known, I have met, lived with, and am intimately acquainted with an overwhelming number of thoroughly clean and decent people who still believe in God and cherish high ideals, and it is *upon the lives of these that I base what I write.* To contend that this does not produce a picture true to life is idiocy. It does. It produces a picture true to ideal life; to the best that good men and good women can do at level best.

" 'I care very little for the magazine or newspaper critics who proclaim that there is no such thing as a moral man, and that my pictures of life are sentimental and idealized. They are! And I glory in them! They are straight, living pictures from the lives of men and women of morals, honor, and loving kindness. They form "idealized pictures of life" because they are copies from life where it touches religion, chastity, love, home, and hope of Heaven ultimately. None of these roads leads to publicity and the divorce

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court. They all end in the shelter and seclusion of a home.

" 'Such a big majority of book critics and authors have begun to teach, whether they really believe it or not, that no book is *true to life* unless it is true to the *worst in life,* that the idea has infected even the women.' "

A Girl of the Limberlost " 'comes fairly close to my idea of a good book. No possible harm can be done any one in reading it. The book can, and does, present a hundred pictures that will draw any reader in closer touch with nature and the Almighty, my primal object in each line I write. The human side of the book is as close a character study as I am capable of making. I regard the character of Mrs. Comstock as the best thought-out and the cleanest-cut study of human nature I have so far been able to do.' "

Prior to the appearance of *A Daughter of the Land* this was Mrs. Porter's best book, unquestionably. All she says about it is perfectly true, but she does not give herself proper credit in respect of one or two of the book's qualities. There is much humor in it and the delineation of Kate Comstock, particularly in the first half of the book, has the sharpness of line and the sureness of handling visible in a fine etching. Consciously or subconsciously Mrs. Porter created at the very outset of her story, in the second chapter, a situation which appeals to the most thrilling and satisfying instinct in the human breast. Elnora, pitifully dressed, has spent a humiliating first day at high school in town. Since her mother will not provide them, Margaret and Wesley Sinton go forth at nightfall to

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buy the clothes the girl needs to wear and sit up half the night to get them ready quickly. It is both humorous and genuinely moving. The reader shares their burst of generosity. He shops with them and sits up with them and worries with them and rejoices and partakes of their happiness in "doing for" the girl; he is all the while quite conscious of the humor of the situation without any abatement of the tenderness and delight that is his as well as theirs. This is great work; it may not be great literature; whether it is or not depends on what you require "literature" to give you. The innumerable readers who require literature to give them what life gives them (or even more, what life unjustly withholds from them)—emotion, pure, deep, contenting and cleansing—these will ask no more than Mrs. Porter gives them here.

The idea of *The Harvester* was suggested to Mrs. Porter by an editor who wanted a magazine article, with human interest in it, about ginseng diggers. As she looked into the raising of the drug, the idea came to her of a man growing drug plants professionally and of a sick girl healed by them. "'I wrote primarily to state that to my personal knowledge, clean, loving men still exist in this world, and that no man is forced to endure the grind of city life if he wills otherwise. . . . I wrote the book as I thought it should be written, to prove my points and establish my contentions. I think it did. Men the globe around promptly wrote me that they had always observed the moral code; others that the subject never in all their lives had been presented to them from my point of view, but now that it had been, they would change and

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do what they could to influence all men to do the same.'"

Laddie—"'Of a truth, the home I described in this book I know to the last grain of wood in the doors, and I painted it with absolute accuracy; and many of the people I described I knew more intimately than I ever have known any others. . . . There was such a man as Laddie, and he was as much bigger and better than my description of him as a real thing is always better than its presentment.'"

Mrs. Porter does not put money first, nor anywhere near first. "'When the public had discovered her and given generous approval to *A Girl of the Limberlost,* when *The Harvester* had established a new record, that would have been the time for the author to prove her commercialism by dropping nature work, and plunging headlong into books it would pay to write, and for which many publishers were offering her alluring sums. Mrs. Porter's answer was the issuing of such books as *Music of the Wild* and *Moths of the Limberlost.* No argument is necessary." No argument is possible. Mrs. Porter has spent a great deal of the small fortunes her novels have brought her on nature books which represent years of fieldwork and a staggering expenditure for scientific materials.

This is Mrs. Porter's own description of the Limberlost swamp where she has done so much work and which she has made yield such good stories.

"'In the beginning of the end a great swamp region lay in northeastern Indiana. Its head was in what is now Noble and DeKalb counties; its body in

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Allen and Wells, and its feet in southern Adams and northern Jay. The Limberlost lies at the foot and was, when I settled near it, exactly as described in my books. The process of dismantling it was told in *Freckles* to start with, carried on in *A Girl of the Limberlost,* and finished in *Moths of the Limberlost.* Now it has so completely fallen prey to commercialism through the devastation of lumbermen, oilmen, and farmers, that I have been forced to move my working territory and build a new cabin about seventy miles north at the head of the swamp in Noble county, where there are many lakes, miles of unbroken marsh, and a far greater wealth of plant and animal life than existed during my time in the southern part. At the north end every bird that frequents the Central States is to be found. Here grow in profusion many orchids, fringed gentians, cardinal flowers, turtle heads, starry campions, purple gerardias, and grass of Parnassus. In one season I have located here almost every flower named in the botanies as native to those regions and several that I can find in no book in my library.

"'But this change of territory involves the purchase of fifteen acres of forest and orchard land, on a lake shore in a marsh country. It means the building of a permanent, all-year-round home, which will provide the comforts of life for my family and furnish a workshop consisting of a library, a photographic darkroom and negative closet, and a printing room for me. I could live in such a home as I could provide on the income from my nature work alone; but when my working grounds were cleared, drained

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and plowed up, literally wiped from the face of the earth, I never could have moved to new country had it not been for the earnings of my novels, which I now spend, and always have spent, in great part, upon my nature work. Based on this plan of work and life I have written ten books, and "please God I live so long," I shall write ten more. Possibly every one of them will be located in northern Indiana. Each one will be filled with all the field and woods legitimately falling to its location and peopled with the best men and women I have known.' "

This promise Mrs. Porter has kept in her latest novel, *A Daughter of the Land,* the story of Kate Bates, an American through and through, who fought for her freedom against long odds, renouncing the easy path of luxury that leads to loss of self-respect. It is Mrs. Porter's finest novel, this story of a woman's life from her teens to well past forty, from school days to her second marriage. It is a much more ambitious attempt than any of her other stories and as successful as it is big.

Shamelessly we have built this chapter almost entirely upon Mrs. Porter's own account of herself—but could any one do better than to present that? We are confident he could not. And aside from what she has to say of her stories they call for no special survey one by one. The one supremely significant thing to grasp ~~is her~~ sincerity and her giving of the best that is in her. Now, the mass of people possess, in respect of these qualities in a writer, a sort of sixth sense, a perfectly infallible instinct that tells them when a writer is sincere, when he is giving

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of his best. It is the faculty aptly described in the phrase: "I don't know much about literature, *but I know what I like.*" To be sure you do! And that's as near as ready characterization can come to the secret! The person who has achieved a certain measure of sophistication or who has cultivated his taste (which may mean improving it but always means narrowing it) does *not* know what he likes! He knows only what he doesn't like—or at least he is always finding it. He pays the price of every refiner in the loss of broad and basic satisfaction. Cultivate a tongue for caviar and you lose the honest and healthful enjoyment of corned beef and cabbage. When you appreciate Bach you can no longer get thrilling pleasure hearing a military band. It's the same way everywhere and with everybody.

If some people find no pleasure or benefit in Gene Stratton-Porter's stories, that is exclusively their own fault. They are looking for certain æsthetic satisfactions in what they read and they require them so absolutely that the writer's best and the writer's sincerity cannot compensate for their absence. Is it good to have come to such a state? Every one must make up his own mind about that, even as he must make his own decision whether he will strive to attain it. Everything of this sort is to be had for a price,—if you want to pay so much.

"'To my way of thinking and working the greatest service a piece of fiction can do any reader is to leave him with a higher ideal of life than he had when he began. If in one small degree it shows him where he

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can be a gentler, saner, cleaner, kindlier man, it is a wonder-working book.'"

Thus Gene Stratton-Porter. There is incontestable evidence that her books have done these very things. Literature, we have been told, is "a criticism of life." How about molding lives?

Books by Gene Stratton-Porter

The Song of the Cardinal, 1903.
Freckles, 1904.
What I Have Done With Birds [*Friends in Feathers*], 1907.
At the Foot of the Rainbow, 1908.
A Girl of the Limberlost, 1909.
Birds of the Bible, 1909.
Music of the Wild, 1910.
The Harvester, 1911.
Moths of the Limberlost, 1912.
Laddie, 1913.
Michael O'Halloran, 1915.
Morning Face.
A Daughter of the Land, 1918.

Mrs. Porter's books are published by Doubleday, Page & Company, New York.

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CHAPTER IX

ELEANOR H. PORTER

IN the pleasant old town of Cambridge, Massachusetts, there is a fourth (top floor) apartment and above it a roof garden. Come up on the roof. "Fresh, clean light canvas, framed in by borders of flowers, with a hammock to dream in and a good stout table and a typewriter," confront us. At the table a little woman, blonde, youthful looking, her light and fluffy hair neatly combed, her blue eyes—"laughing eyes"—changing expression rapidly with her thoughts. She is writing with a lead pencil and when she stops to talk to us she shows a ready wittedness, a conversational gift, an aliveness that are charming—charming!

She tells us that she works here every morning when too boisterous winds or a driving storm do not make it impossible; or too low a temperature. She writes novels. It takes her a year to do one and when she has finished she is good for nothing for several days. She writes each book three times; first in lead pencil, the second draft on the typewriter here, "and it is this copy that is polished over and rewritten and tinkered with—and all fixed up." The third draft has usually few changes. It, or a stenographer's copy of it, goes to the publisher, and later

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there comes a message from Houghton Mifflin Company in Boston:

"Advance orders for your new novel *Just David* are 100,000 copies."

Isn't that rewarding? *Just David* will be out in a few days now. . . .

The author of *Just David*—and *The Road to Understanding* and *Oh, Money! Money!* and, why *of course* of *Pollyanna*!—is not thinking of the royalties that will be hers on 100,000 copies of her novel. No. Eleanor H. Porter makes a moderate fortune with each of her books. But what rewards her for the task of writing them—did you ever sit down and write, just *write,* 80,000 words, let alone telling a story?—what gives her the satisfaction that's of the heart is the invincible proof that a hundred thousand are buying her book on faith. They believe in *her,* in her work; she has pleased them, made them happier or better somehow, somewhere, somewhen; they look to her for help, for cheer, for entertainment, for a kind of enlightenment that they haven't found elsewhere and that will be supremely worth their while.

Stand aside, you who are sophisticated, cynical, world worn and merely flippant! If you could see assembled before you in one vast throng this hundred thousand and tens of thousands more, if you could see them gathered about you with upturned interested, expectant and eager faces, what would you say? What *could* you say? Do you think your sophistication would be proof against the expression on these faces? Do you think that *you* could give

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them what they need? Would your subtleties help them? Would they listen to you and go away a little braver, a little more comforted, a little readier to face life?

Up in the White Mountains there's a cabin called after the girl Pollyanna. Out in Colorado there's a Pollyanna teahouse. A little maid in Texas bears the name. The builder of an apartment house in an Indiana city has his fancy struck. There's a Pollyanna brand of milk, and Pollyanna clubs are formed whose members sport an enameled button showing a young girl's sweet face. Surely the woman who can so touch the hearts, the imagination, or even merely the fancy of men and women and children everywhere—surely she and her work call for respectful consideration. There must be something here, something admirable, if we can only put our fingers on it! There is.

And first let us hear about Mrs. Porter herself. We have met her at work. Was there anything to suggest direct descent from Governor William Bradford of the Mayflower and the "stern and rockbound coast"? There was not. There was, however, a suggestion of a childhood spent in an oldtime white frame New England house, with green blinds and big pillars in front. There was certainly more than a suggestion of a child brought up to play indoors and out. With a little imagination we could have seen her studying music, always music, loving to improvise. "I liked to play out all my moods and everything I saw and heard. I could get rid of my tempers, too, by sometimes just playing them out.

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And I liked to play the beautiful things I saw—sunsets, woods and lakes. . . . In that way, perhaps, *David* is autobiographical. . . . The many years' training in voice as well as instrumental music has never failed to help me in expressing just the mood I want to express."

She was born in Littleton, New Hampshire, a place of some few thousands in the White Mountains, the daughter of Francis H. Hodgman and Llewella Woolson Hodgman. She had a brother to play with. She "knew the woods from early childhood." Little verses and stories by her commemorated birthdays and other occasions of moment. In high school ill health arrested her studies. For a while books had to be put entirely aside and she lived a good deal outdoors. Spruce, fir, cedar and tamarack, mountain flowers and plants, became personalities to be distinguished one from another and to be delighted in for their peculiarities. When she wrote *Just David* she had only to recall her youth, after all.

Health regained, she went to Boston for more musical study under private teachers and at the New England Conservatory. She sang in concerts and in church choirs. In 1892 she was married to John Lyman Porter. She lived a year in Chattanooga and a few years in New York and Springfield, Vermont; Boston (Cambridge) has been her home with these exceptions. Mr. and Mrs. Porter have lived in Cambridge for the last sixteen years. Mrs. Porter's mother, Mrs. Hodgman, an invalid, has lived with them.

We have said that Mrs. Porter works every morn-

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ing. Yes, the morning hours are set apart for her work and it is not readily interrupted. Her first book, published in 1907, was *Cross Currents,* a study of child labor, struck out from her by what she had seen in New York of youngsters made to toil at the fashioning of artificial flowers. Indeed, her first impulse to write came to her in New York, on an afternoon several years after her marriage, as she stood in Trinity churchyard. It was a flash, a dramatic impression such as comes to many a visitor. When these dead awaken! *If* these dead were to awaken, were to come back to us here and now! How would they think and feel about what they would see? What would they say and do?

Well—

"So that was how I got my start." True enough, for the real start comes in the impulse, doesn't it? After that has been felt intervals hardly matter. . . .

Cross Currents was successful and Mrs. Porter was persuaded to write a sequel, *The Turn of the Tide.* She had developed a habit, now fixed, of clipping from newspapers and magazines bits of news, comments, whatnot, that were significant to her. These she filed, filed and card indexed. One day she saw in some magazine four lines expressing wonder as to what would happen if feminine influence came into the home life of three bachelors.

From those four lines, or rather, from the idea in them, came *Miss Billy;* and from *Miss Billy* came *Miss Billy's Decision* and *Miss Billy—Married.* Not immediately; Mrs. Porter filed the clipping. She thought vaguely that perhaps, maybe, some day, she

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would write a short story—only a short story—based on the idea in this sentence or so. . . .

Pollyanna—

So many think of Mrs. Porter only as the author of *Pollyanna*—they are not her real readers who know better!—that it is much fairer to her and ourselves to consider her other books. After the Pollyanna stories came *Just David,* easily accounted for. Mrs. Porter says that her thoughts had often played around the idea of a child brought up to know only what is good. You shudder, or laugh. Good heavens, don't you wish that *you* could have been spared some of the things you were brought up to know? At the bottom of your acquired attitude is there no faint wistfulness, no trace of longing for something once loved and lost—not awhile but forever?

David is the only son of a violinist. After his mother's death the father carries the boy to a cabin in the mountains. Six years afterward he is brought to a quiet country town—a lad in love with music, with birds and flowers.

"Mr. and Mrs. Holly, more than ever now, were learning to look at the world through David's eyes. One day—one wonderful day—they went to walk in the woods with the boy; and whenever before had Simon Holly left his work for so frivolous a thing as to walk in the woods!

"It was not accomplished without a struggle, as David could have told. All the morning David urged and begged. If for once, just once, they would leave everything and come, they would not regret it, he was sure. But they shook their heads and said,

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'No, no, impossible.' In the afternoon the pies were done and the potatoes dug and David urged and pleaded again. And to please the boy they went.

"It was a curious walk. Ellen Holly trod softly with timid feet. She threw hurried, frightened glances from side to side. It was plain that Ellen Holly did not know how to play. Simon Holly stalked at her elbow, stern, silent and preoccupied. It was plain that Simon Holly not only did not know how to play, but did not care to find out.

"The boy tripped along ahead and talked. He had the air of a monarch displaying his kingdom. Here was a flower that was like a story for interest, and there was a bush that bore a secret worth telling. Even Simon Holly glowed into a semblance of life when David had unerringly picked out and called by name the spruce, and fir, and pine, and larch; and then, in answer to Mrs. Holly's murmured, 'But, David, where is the difference? They look so much alike,' had said:

" 'Oh, but they are not. Just see how much more pointed at the top this fir is than that spruce back there; and the branches grow straight out, too, like arms, and they are all smooth and tapering at the end like a pussy-cat's tail. But the spruce back there —its branches turned down and out—didn't you notice?—and they are all bushy at the end like a squirrel's tail. Oh, they're lots different.

" 'That's a larch way ahead—that one with the branches all scraggly and close down to the ground. I could start to climb that easy, but I couldn't that pine over there. See, it's way up before there is a

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place for your feet! But I love pines. Up there on the mountain, where I lived, the pines were so tall that it seemed as if God used them sometimes to hold up the sky.'

"And Simon Holly heard, and said nothing, and that he did say nothing—especially nothing in answer to David's confident assertions concerning celestial and terrestrial architecture—only goes to show how well, indeed, the man was learning to look at the world through David's eyes. . . ."

"If the characters are true, the story tells itself," says Mrs. Porter. "The plot comes very easily after I get some leading idea which I wish to work out. It is sometimes months after I have something in mind before I have carried the idea along far enough to begin writing. The ideas for novels come from careful observation and wide reading.

"No, I would not say that novels are written by inspiration. I call it enthusiasm. And unless the writer has enthusiasm while writing a novel I think the indifference is bound to show in the story."

Her own enthusiasm holds her to the task, carries her through the year she devotes to a book, enables her sometimes to write steadily for eight or nine hours and then spend an evening with her heavy correspondence. Her enthusiasm, a steady flame, burns to the end; and then her exhaustion does not matter. The task is done.

Without an idea—a crisp, definite, interesting idea is always there, whether you like her novels or no —without an idea Mrs. Porter won't write. But when she begins to write she has much more than the

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idea. She has a synopsis written out. She couldn't work without one, she says. And to that synopsis she sticks pretty closely. "For I must see my aim," she explains, "I must have every part of the story bear definitely toward the object. The synopsis of *Pollyanna* differs very little from the completed story. However, the glad game was not in the synopsis. That did invent itself—in the second chapter. And of course various characters always have a way of sort of writing themselves in, and new scenes and incidents suggest themselves as the book grows."

Does Mrs. Porter preach? Not by intention. She abhors the notion of trying to. She does believe that "the idea of happiness should be held up to people. But I do not attempt to preach happiness," she adds hastily. "I make my characters as simple and natural as possible. If the characters are sufficiently vivid, if they are true, they can say a lot of things that no author could say directly without being charged with sermonizing."

Oho! remarks the critic, Mrs. Porter thinks that if she puts her preaching into the mouths of her persons she can escape the charge of sermonizing. Wrong. Mrs. Porter does not say that. She does declare that *if the characters are true* they can say things that, from the author, would be mere preaching. Truth in your people comes first, must always be first; if they are true they can, and probably will, not only say but do many things with a moral in them. Why, aren't we always reading a moral out of—or into—every other thing we hear our neighbors say or see them do?

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The critic has another quarrel with Eleanor Porter. He accuses her of "evasive idealism" and "sham optimism" in her stories. Let her answer him:

"Just why the 'realities of life' should always mean the filth and brambles, sticks and stones and stumbling blocks of our daily pathway I have never understood," she cries. "But such seems to be the case. To most critics there are evidently no pleasantly agreeable, decent qualities of life. But I believe that there are, and these realities may lend themselves to just as sincere and direct an interpretation of life as may the other kind.

"There is a blue sky, there is a warm sun, and there are birds that sing in the treetops. Then why should their presence be unnoticed—sometimes? That is certainly not a sugary philosophy utterly without a basis in logic or human experience. I realize that this sort of thing can be overdone, but still contend that always to look at the hole instead of the doughnut is not only very foolish—but very detrimental to one's digestion."

Bravo! A simple, straightforward and unstudied rejoinder, that! And if the critic says that he is only asking for "both realities" let us demand of him why he praised the "artistry" of those dark Russian novels of muck and insanity—and nothing else. He must condemn them for their worse one-sidedness ere we listen to another word from him. Moreover, we have, we must confess, whatever our personal tastes in fiction, always enough and too many of the specialists in gloom; never quite enough of the purveyors of cheerfulness.

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You may feel a possibly irrational prejudice against the child that cheers, as Pollyanna or David, but if you do not find absorbing the situation in a "grown-up" novel like *The Road to Understanding* it is your fault, not Eleanor Porter's. Here is the son of a very rich man who has always had his way and so takes it headlong in the matter of marrying his aunt's nursegirl. She is not fitted to make him happy. They are separated—never mind how. The husband thinks of it as a "vacation" for his wife and the baby girl and has no idea that the breach may be semi-permanent. The wife makes it so. She goes to a friend of her husband and begs him to enable her to become in education, in tastes, in deportment fit to be Burke Denby's wife. And she persuades him to it. Her whereabouts, the whereabouts of herself and Burke Denby's little daughter, is so simply and effectually concealed that the husband never gets trace of them. What Helen Denby has set out to do is rather impossible as regards herself, she acknowledges that; but with the passage of years and constant association with well-bred people she does very largely acquire the things she lacked. Yes, years! It is an idea and it is certainly a situation. This is no place to give away a denouement but—they are brought together again.

An idea just as ingenious is the foundation of Mrs. Porter's amusing *Oh, Money! Money!* It is the attempt of Mr. Stanley G. Fulton, possessor of twenty millions of dollars, to find out how some of his heirs will spend money after he is dead. They are three distant cousins and each of them receives a

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trustee's check for $100,000. Then plain John Smith appears among them and watches results. He also learns a thing or two and finds a wife in a woman of middle age (or more) whose humorous wisdom is aptly summed up by her remark that "if you don't know how to get happiness out of five dollars, you won't know how to get it out of five thousand. For it isn't the money that does things; it's the man behind the money."

Sell? Of course books like this sell! You don't have to be a psychologist to grasp and subscribe to the six reasons for a big sale, advanced by the publishers just before the publication of *Oh, Money! Money!*—six reasons whose validity has been sufficiently proved as these lines are being written, with proofs piling up hour by hour. Here they are:

1. It deals with the most interesting subject in the world—the getting and spending of money.

2. The story of three families—cousins—who unexpectedly receive $100,000 each from an unknown relative, will strike a responsive chord in every reader's heart and set every reader thinking how *he* would spend the money.

3. It has the same quality that has made Cinderella the most popular of all fairy tales, the joy of watching a girl who has never been fairly treated come out on top in spite of all odds.

4. The scene is laid in a little village and the whole book is a gem of country life and shrewd Yankee philosophy.

5. There is a charming love theme with a happy ending.

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6. And, above all, the story teaches an unobtrusive lesson that will appeal to every one of Mrs. Porter's readers; the lesson that happiness must come from within, and that money cannot buy it.

. . . . . .

They are invincible, unassailable, these arguments, for they are *facts*. Equally invincible, equally unassailable, equally a big fact to be taken into any reckoning of living American writers, is Eleanor Hodgman Porter.

BOOKS BY ELEANOR H. PORTER

Cross Currents, 1907.
The Turn of the Tide, 1908.
The Story of Marco, 1911.
Miss Billy, 1911.
Miss Billy's Decision, 1912.
Pollyanna, 1913.
Miss Billy—Married, 1914.
Pollyanna Grows Up, 1915.
Just David, 1916.
The Road to Understanding, 1917.
Oh, Money! Money! 1918.

The first two books were published by W. A. Wilde, Boston; the books about Miss Billy and Pollyanna by the Page Company, Boston; the last three books by Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.

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CHAPTER X

KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN

ONCE Kate Douglas Wiggin, at a fair held in the grounds of Lord Darnley, in County Meath, Ireland, visited a crystal gazer "imported from Dublin for the occasion."

"You have many children," said the seer.

"I have no children," Mrs. Wiggin replied.

"But I see them; they are coming, still coming. O, so many little ones; they are clinging to you; you are surrounded by them," the woman declared, her eyes on the ball. "They are children of a relative? No? . . . I cannot understand. I *see them.*"

They left her puzzled and frowning. Perhaps she never will know how wonderfully right was her vision.

"Little, lame Patsy and the angelic Carol; the mirth-provoking tribe of the Ruggleses; brave Timothy and bewitching Lady Gay; pathetic Marm Lisa and the incorrigible twins, Atlantic and Pacific Simonson; blithe Polly Oliver, with her genius for story-telling; winsome Rebecca and the faithful Emma Jane,—all these figures crowd about us, and claim their places as everybody's children."

It is impossible to read Kate Douglas Wiggin, think of her or write about her without emotion, the

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kind of emotion that it is good to feel. The world is a brighter world because she has lived in it, a better world because she has written for it. Does this sound horribly trite? Nothing is trite which is deeply felt and words, though they may indicate the channel, can with difficulty measure the depth or gauge the emotional flow. You who have lost your enthusiasm with your illusions, you whose channels of feeling have trickled dry, you who live in a desert whose aridity responds only to intellectual dry farming—keep off this chapter! But all of you millions who love children, who like simple and durable humor, who are not too far from laughter or tears, who are not ashamed of tenderness, do you, one and all (there are countless millions of you!) stay with us for a half hour!

Kate Douglas Wiggin, born a Smith, came of New England stock that bred teachers and preachers and law-givers and developed those humane traits which make charitable effort and philanthropism a matter of course, like prayer or the pie which Emerson preferred for breakfast. She happens to have been born in Philadelphia, September 28, 1859, the daughter of Robert N. Smith, and Helen E. (Dyer) Smith, but all her youth was spent east of the New York line. A rural childhood; then the fine old school for girls called Abbott Academy, at Andover, Massachusetts. At eighteen her step-father's health made imperative a removal to California. After her graduation at Andover Kate Smith joined the family in Santa Barbara. She had been trained to teach children; she was a mere girl when she was called to direct

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the famous Silver Street kindergartens of San Francisco. Through her efforts it was that the first free kindergartens for poor children were organized in California. She knew the methods of Froebel and has done as much as any one in this country to secure their spread and adoption. First as a kindergartner and then as a training teacher her enthusiasm, her gift for leadership, her personal charm made others, young and old, her devoted friends. For the babies of Tar Flat and the Barbary Coast and for the young women of cultivation who sought to become teachers she had the same fascination. She is irresistible; if she were not she could not be liked and loved in New England as she is at this day. Who else could gather the neighbors in Old Buxton Meeting-House to hear, read aloud to them by the author from the manuscript, stories of themselves and their apparently unremarkable doings? With any one but Mrs. Wiggin the audience would be self-conscious, detestably uncomfortable. But she is so soft-voiced, so agreeable; she has so much sympathy and humor, is so pleasant to look upon, is, in short, so "nice" and so neighborly that self-consciousness is out of the question. Besides, you can be proud of her. . . . And you are.

Old Buxton Meeting-House is in Maine, and it is in Maine, in the village of Hollis, that the people of whom Mrs. Wiggin writes grow into being. Her home is called Quillcote and from a cool green study where she works she can hear the song of the Saco River and look through latticed windows by her desk to where the shining weather-vane, a golden quill,

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swings on the roof of the old barn. It is a quaint and ancient dwelling of colonial date and colonial style set among arching elms. The village is not a summer resort but a dreaming settlement on the banks of the Saco. As it flows past the Quillcote elms the river widens into a lake. A few rods below the house it has a fall. Below the fall for a mile or so there is "foaming, curving, prancing white water." It is the Saco, placid and turbulent, which runs through *Timothy's Quest* and *Rebecca* and *Rose o' the River.*

Quillcote's important structure, like the home of H. G. Wells's Mr. Britling, is the barn. We can believe that the builder would not recognize it, aside from the weather-vane. It is what, in the jargon of the day, is known as a "community center." Years ago all the interior was ripped out. A new floor was laid, casement windows were cut in and the place took on the semblance of a rustic hall. Alone untampered with, the great century-old rafters, hewn of stout-hearted oak and strong as ever, remain in position. The barn walls were brushed down but left their hue of tawny brown. Other old barns were stripped to supply fish-hook hinges, suitably antique; ancient latches, decorative horns of the moose. Solid settles were constructed of old boards weathered to a silver gray. Old lanterns fitted with candles were hung from harness pegs about the walls. The old grain-chest, piled high with cushions, stands at one end of the big oblong room. "Wide doors open at the back into a field of buttercups and daisies." They still dance the square dances on the threshing floor.

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Biography is pointless if it does not build us a picture; and once we have our picture who cares for dates and a chronicle of the years? In the girl in New England, the young woman kindergartner in San Francisco, the visitor to Ireland (and England and Scotland), the writer reading from her manuscript in Old Buxton Meeting-House, the festival-bringer of the Quillcote barn you have Kate Douglas Wiggin, born a Smith; you have very completely and with a delightful authenticity the creator of all those hosts of happy children, children sometimes sad, sometimes grieved but always as certain of happiness as they are of sunshine;—you have the Penelope who found the humors of foreign travel which more pretentious humorists coming later could merely copy; you have the perceptive and sympathetic heart which saw the Christmas romance of *The Old Peabody Pew.* You ask no more. You ask only to be allowed to recall with a changing but invariable pleasure the dozens of tales in which she has shared with you her feelings about life.

Do you remember the Penelope books? Do you *remember!* Somehow, *Penelope's Progress,* wherein we accompany Salemina, Francesca and Penelope through Scotland, has always seemed a bit the best. Page 2, please:

"On arriving in New York, Francesca discovered that the young lawyer whom for six months she had been advising to marry somebody 'more worthy than herself' was at last about to do it. This was somewhat in the nature of a shock, for Francesca has been in the habit, ever since she was seventeen, of giving

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her lovers similar advice, and up to this time no one of them has ever taken it. She therefore has had the not unnatural hope, I think, of organizing at one time or another all those disappointed and faithful swains into a celibate brotherhood; and perhaps of driving by the interesting monastery with her husband and calling his attention modestly to the fact that these poor monks were filling their barren lives with deeds of piety, trying to remember their Creator with such assiduity that they might, in time, forget Her."

Frank Stockton could be as funny as that. Mark Twain might have written the close of the first chapter, where Francesca and Penelope, heads bent over a genealogical table of the English kings, try to decide whether "b. 1665" means born or beheaded. Irvin Cobb, shaking our sides with his discussion of English pronunciation of proper names, and gravely referring to a Norwegian fjord ("pronounced by the English, Ferguson") was anticipated by nearly twenty years when Mrs. Wiggin wrote:

"On the ground floor are the Misses Hepburn-Sciennes (pronounced Hebburn-Sheens); on the floor above us are Miss Colquhoun (Cohoon) and her cousin Miss Cockburn-Sinclair (Coburn-Sinkler). As soon as the Hepburn-Sciennes depart, Mrs. M'Collop expects Mrs. Menzies of Kilconquhar, of whom we shall speak as Mrs. Mingess of Kinyukkar."

Marm Lisa is graced with the presence of S. Cora Grubb, as well as the youthful Atlantic and Pacific Simonson. Have we not yet with us such places as Mrs. Grubb's Unity Hall, the Meeting-Place of the Order of Present Perfection? We have. On the wall

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was "an ingenious pictorial representation of the fifty largest cities of the world, with the successful establishment of various regenerating ideas indicated by colored disks of paper neatly pasted on the surface." Blue was for Temperance, green for the Single Tax, orange, Cremation; red, Abolition of War; purple, Vegetarianism; yellow, Hypnotism; black, Dress Reform; blush rose, Social Purity; silver, Theosophy; magenta, Religious Liberty; and, somewhat inappropriately, crushed strawberry denoted that in this spot the Emancipation of Women had made a forward stride. It was left for a small gold star to signify the progress of the Eldorado face powder, S. Cora Grubb, sole agent.

The cat 'Zekiel in *The Old Peabody Pew:*

"'Zekiel had lost his tail in a mowing-machine; 'Zekiel had the asthma, and the immersion of his nose in milk made him sneeze, so he was wont to slip his paw in and out of the dish and lick it patiently for five minutes together. Nancy often watched him pityingly, giving him kind and gentle words to sustain his fainting spirit, but to-night she paid no heed to him, although he sneezed violently to attract her attention."

The sensation when, after the ringing of the last bell, Nancy Wentworth walked up the aisle on Justin Peabody's arm, is conveyed by some parentheses of the comment later in the day. The two had taken their seats side by side in the old family pew.

"('And consid'able close, too, though there was plenty o' room!')

"('And no one that I ever heard of so much as suspicioned that they had ever kept company!')

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"('And do you s'pose she knew Justin was expected back when she scrubbed his pew a-Friday?')

"('And this explains the empty pulpit vases!')

"('And I always said that Nancy would make a real handsome couple if she ever got anybody to couple with!')"

The boastful old man, Turrible Wiley, in *Rose o' the River:*

" 'I remember once I was smokin' my pipe when a jam broke under me. 'Twas a small jam, or what we call a small jam on the Kennebec,—only about three hundred thousand pine logs. The first thing I knowed, I was shootin' back an' forth in the b'ilin' foam, hangin' on t' the end of a log like a spider. My hands was clasped round the log, and I never lost control o' my pipe. They said I smoked right along, jest as cool an' placid as a pond-lily.'

" 'Why'd you quit drivin'?' inquired Ivory.

" 'My strength wa'n't ekal to it,' Mr. Wiley responded sadly. 'I was all skin, bones, an' nerve. . . .

" 'I've tried all kinds o' labor. Some of 'em don't suit my liver, some disagrees with my stomach, and the rest of 'em has vibrations.' "

In January, 1911, over 2,000,000 copies of Mrs. Wiggin's books had been sold; to-day the total is probably approaching 3,000,000. The most popular of her books is *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm,* which has been likened, in explanation of its popularity, to *Little Women.* But no explanation is necessary. Rebecca is entirely, naturally human. Whether she is perplexing her aunts or telling Miss Dearborn that

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she can't write about nature and slavery, having really nothing to say about either; whether she is making her report on the missionaries' children "all born under Syrian skies," or aweing Emma Jane with original ideas, or helping the Simpsons, with the aid of Mr. Aladdin, to acquire a wonderful lamp;—at all times, at every moment Rebecca Rowena Randall reminds us of the youngsters we have known, and perhaps, a little, of the youngsters we were once ourselves.

The triumph of naturalness, the perfect fidelity to the life of the child; these explain *Rebecca* and *Rebecca's* success, signalized less in the selling of hundreds of thousands of copies, in the acting of the play made from the book for months and months and months, than in the joyous recognition with which Mrs. Wiggin's heroine was greeted. Rebecca inditing the couplet:

"When Joy and Duty clash
Let Duty go to smash"—

Rebecca playing on the tinkling old piano, "Wild roved an Indian girl, bright Alfarata," Rebecca doing this, thinking that, saying the thing that needs to be said—generous, romantic, resourceful and brighter than her surroundings—is a person it does us all good to know. Copies of the book in libraries are read to shreds. The world, which can see through any sham, loves this story. The world is right. To learn, in the words of one of Conrad's heroes, to live, to love and to put your trust in life is all that matters. Mrs. Wiggin shows us how.

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Books by Kate Douglas Wiggin

The Birds' Christmas Carol, 1886.
The Story of Patsy, 1889.
A Summer in a Canyon, 1889.
Timothy's Quest, 1890.
The Story Hour, 1890. (With Nora A. Smith, her sister.)
Children's Rights, 1892. (With Nora A. Smith.)
A Cathedral Courtship and *Penelope's English Experiences,* 1893.
Polly Oliver's Problem, 1893.
The Village Watch-Tower, 1895.
Froebel's Gifts, 1895. (With Nora A. Smith.)
Froebel's Occupations, 1896. (With Nora A. Smith.)
Kindergarten Principles and Practice, 1896. (With Nora A. Smith.)
Marm Lisa, 1896.
Nine Love Songs, And A Carol, 1896. (Music by Mrs. Wiggin to words by Herrick, Sill, and others.)
Penelope's Progress, 1898.
Penelope's Scottish Experiences, 1900.
Penelope's Irish Experiences, 1901.
The Diary of a Goose Girl, 1902.
Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm, 1903.
The Affair at the Inn, 1904. (With Mary and Jane Findlater and Allan McAulay.)
Rose o' the River, 1905.
New Chronicles of Rebecca, 1907.
Finding a Home, 1907.
The Flag Raising, 1907.

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The Old Peabody Pew, 1907.
Susanna and Sue, 1909.
Robinetta, 1911. (With Mary and Jane Findlater and Allan McAulay.)
Mother Carey's Chickens, 1911.
A Child's Journey With Dickens, 1912.
The Story of Waitstill Baxter, 1913.
Penelope's Postscripts, 1915.
The Romance of a Christmas Card, 1916.
Golden Numbers, 1917.
The Posy Ring, 1917.

Published by Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.

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CHAPTER XI

MARY JOHNSTON

DIDN'T you ever notice, Aunt Lucy," asks Molly Cary on page 32 of Mary Johnston's novel, *The Long Roll,* "how everybody really belongs in a book?"

It is the very question Mary Johnston herself has been asking these twenty years, ever since *Prisoners of Hope* announced to the world the advent of a new American writer, a woman, to whom it would be necessary to pay respectful attention, to whom it would be wise to give that special admiration reserved for the artist regardless of sex or nativity. Everybody really does belong in a book, especially Mary Johnston in a book upon American women novelists! Prepare, then, for a discursive chapter. Prepare to consider literary genius. Miss Johnston has something, or several things, which no amount of analysis can entirely label and no consideration of circumstances wholly account for.

She is the most dramatic of American women writers. Do you remember the ending of the first chapter of *To Have and To Hold?* A shipload of maidens, "fair and chaste, but meanly born," has arrived at Jamestown, Virginia, in the early days of that settlement. A friend traveling by has told Ralph Percy

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about it and counseled him to go to town and get him a wife. Percy rejects the idea, but his friend passing on he finds himself alone and lonely in a cheerless house. He tries to read Master Shakespeare's plays and cannot. Idly he begins dicing. His mind goes back to the English manorhouse that had been his home.

"To-morrow would be my thirty-sixth birthday. All the numbers that I cast were high. 'If I throw ambs-ace,' I said, with a smile for my own caprice, 'curse me if I do not take Rolfe's advice!'

"I shook the box and clapped it down upon the table, then lifted it, and stared with a lengthening face at what it had hidden; which done, I diced no more, but put out my lights and went soberly to bed."

Still more dramatic because it makes a greater demand upon the reader's imagination, requiring him to picture for himself the ceaseless self-torture of a murderer, is the ending of *Lewis Rand*. Rand has killed Ludwell Cary and has not been found out. At length he walks into the sheriff's office. When the news gets abroad "the boy who minded the sheriff's door found himself a hero, and the words treasured that fell from his tongue." The last words of the book are as follows:

"'Fairfax Cary [brother of the slain man] was in the court room yesterday when he [Rand] was committed. He [Fairfax Cary] and Lewis Rand spoke to each other, but no one heard what they said.'

"The boy came to the front again. 'I didn't hear much that morning before Mr. Garrett [the sheriff] sent me away, but I heard why he [Rand] gave himself up. I thought it wasn't much of a reason——'

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"The crowd pressed closer, 'What was it, Michael, what was it?'

" 'It sounds foolish,' answered the boy, 'but I've got it right. He said he must have sleep.' "

The funeral of Stonewall Jackson in the last pages of *The Long Roll:*

"Beneath arching trees, by houses of mellow red brick, houses of pale gray stucco, by old porches and ironwork balconies, by wistaria and climbing roses and magnolias with white chalices, the long procession bore Stonewall Jackson. By St. Paul's they bore him, by Washington and the great bronze men in his company, by Jefferson and Marshall, by Henry and Mason, by Lewis and Nelson. They bore him over the greensward to the Capitol steps, and there the hearse stopped. Six generals lifted the coffin, Longstreet going before. The bells tolled and the Dead March rang, and all the people on the green slopes of the historic place uncovered their heads and wept. The coffin, high-borne, passed upward and between the great, white, Doric columns. It passed into the Capitol and into the Hall of the Lower House. Here it rested before the Speaker's Chair.

"All day Stonewall Jackson lay in state. Twenty thousand people, from the President of the Confederacy to the last poor wounded soldier who could creep hither, passed before the bier, looked upon the calm face, the flag-enshrouded form, lying among lilies before the Speaker's Chair, in the Virginia Hall of Delegates, in the Capitol of the Confederacy. All day the bells tolled, all day the minute guns were fired.

"A man of the Stonewall Brigade, pausing his mo-

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ment before the dead leader, first bent, then lifted his head. He was a scout, a blonde soldier, tall and strong, with a quiet, studious face and sea-blue eyes. He looked now at the vaulted roof as though he saw instead the sky. He spoke in a controlled, determined voice. 'What Stonewall Jackson always said was just this: *"Press forward!"*' He passed on.

"Presently in line came a private soldier of A. P. Hill's, a young man like a beautiful athlete from a frieze, an athlete who was also a philosopher. 'Hail, great man of the past!' he said. 'If to-day you consort with Cæsar, tell him we still make war.' He, too, went on.

"Others passed, and then there came an artillery-man, a gunner of the Horse Artillery. Gray-eyed, broad-browed, he stood his moment and gazed upon the dead soldier among the lilies. 'Hooker yet upon the Rappahannock,' he said. 'We must have him across the Potomac, and we must ourselves invade Pennsylvania.'"

So ends the book with a dramatic height which it is not in human power to surpass because it ends nothing. We forget rather frequently that it is of the essence of drama that *things go on.* A play or a book which leaves us with the sense of utter completion, with the feeling that nothing more happens or can happen, falls short of the highest dramatic effect which is that of continuity of life and action, with various events—bitter, happy, tragic and glorious—marking so many stages of an unending record. The last words of *The Long Roll* are worthy of the greatest of Miss Johnston's tales.

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The sense of the dramatic cannot be acquired. It must be born in a writer and if he have it he will apply it unfailingly to all possible material that comes his way. Miss Johnston's possession of this sense is one element of her genius—perhaps the most important. The second element is her creative imagination, equally innate. To have to use terms of this sort is a pity, but let us see just what her "creative imagination" is.

If you will turn to her book *The Wanderers* you will find that it is a series of nineteen chapters, each unrelated to the others except in the underlying theme, the relationship of men and women. This relationship is pictured at various times and places in the world's history, from the period when the human race knew not the uses of fire to the days of the French Revolution. Now for the earlier chapters of this book there were no historical records to which Miss Johnston could turn for an idea of how men and women lived in those days; she is dealing with ages before recorded history began. No doubt she got what she could out of the scientists, the anthropologists and others who seek for the truth of the human race's beginnings. But scientific facts, head measurements, skull conformations, ingenious theories based on the cave man's drawings, are one thing and a picture of life as it was lived tens of thousands of years ago is quite another. How evoke the picture?

Well, we can't tell you *how* it is done, for if that could be told the manner could be copied and we should many of us be able to write such chapters as open *The Wanderers*. All we can be certain of is this, that Miss Johnston was able to place herself in

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the surroundings of a primitive woman of the tree-folk—so much was the first imaginative step. And having taken this first step she was able to create the moments and hours of that creature's existence, to imagine her thoughts and her actions with respect to the things about her. That is what we mean by creative imagination. There is a good deal less of it in story-telling than is generally supposed. For the world has no idea of the extent to which novels and tales of all kinds are merely autobiographical, or reminiscent of scenes and persons, emotions and traits, once known. What is recalled is not imagined nor even invented. A person may be lifelike, wonderfully done, convincing, typical, true, and yet not be anything but a patchwork from an actual past. He is neither imagined nor created and a certain amount of re-creation involving only a small amount of imagination, or even none at all, is the only actual contribution of his author.

All this is very didactic but inescapable in the consideration of a serious artist like Mary Johnston. She has the acutely dramatic sense, she has imagination and a creative imagination at that; what else has she? Nothing that may not be gained by the most patient striving. These two qualities, these two never-to-be-acquired gifts, these two born endowments are the sole attributes of literary genius. All the rest—an almost boundless capacity for study, for digging up detail, for documenting one's self; a racy and enriched style; a faculty for reading the essentials of character and putting them sharply on paper; a knack at humor skillfully distilled throughout the pages; a mastery of

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poignancy and the art of touching to tears—these are to be had for taking pains, infinite and unresting pains. It may be said that they will never be gained without the possession of a conscience scrupulous to the *n*th degree and that such a conscience must be born in one. True, but thousands have it. They become fine artists, we acknowledge them as such; but confuse them with the geniuses we never do!

Well, but! exclaims the reader, granted Miss Johnston's genius, let us see the woman! At once, at once! with the preliminary caution that interesting and instructive as the picture will be the inexplicable will be always a part of it. Why, we think we have made clear. Abandoning further transcendentalism let us turn our eyes to Virginia.

The Long Roll starts with the reading of the Botetourt Resolutions and it was in Buchanan, a village of Botetourt county, Virginia, that Mary Johnston, the daughter of John William Johnston and Elizabeth Alexander Johnston, was born on November 21, 1870. The Blue Ridge Mountains shadowed the town, which had been partly burned some six years earlier, the home of the Johnstons being one of many destroyed by the sweep of civil war. Three miles away ran a railroad. A stage-coach and canal boats joined Buchanan of the '70s to the rest of the State and country. The village is unrecognizable now. It had a boom. There are two railroads. The old homes are in decay. The old families are spread afar.

The girl was frail and had to be educated at home. Her grandmother, a Scotchwoman, first taught her and afterward an aunt took her in hand. Major

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Johnston had a sizable library in which his daughter conducted her own explorations. Histories fascinated her. As she grew older governesses were employed. She did not go to school until she was sixteen and then for less than three months. The family had just moved to Birmingham, Alabama, at the behest of the father's business and professional interests. Miss Johnston had been packed off to a finishing school in Atlanta. Her health could not stand it and she was brought home where, a year later, her mother died.

Major Johnston, a lawyer and ex-member of the Virginia Legislature, was interested in Southern railroads and had a hand in the beginnings of some of the business enterprises which give Birmingham its present industrial importance. The death of the mother left him with several children of whom Mary Johnston was the eldest. Upon her fell the direction of the household. It has been thought worthy of remark, in view of Miss Johnston's activities as a suffragist, that she *can* keep house. She has not done so in later years for the very good reason that she has not had to. We come to that a little later, however.

Her writing was for some time done at no particular hour and in no especial place, but a good deal of it in the open air. Her first novel, *Prisoners of Hope,* published when she was twenty-eight, was begun while she was living at the San Remo in New York; and she wrote a large part of it in a quiet corner in Central Park. *To Have and To Hold,* appearing two years later and constituting a great popular success, was begun in Birmingham and completed mainly at a small Virginia mountain resort. The first draft was

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written with a lead pencil and revised with exceeding thoroughness, after which it was typewritten.

Major Johnston's death sent his daughter to Richmond, where she made her home at 110 East Franklin street with her sisters, Eloise and Elizabeth Johnston, as the other members of the household. Miss Johnston's father indubitably did a great deal to make possible *The Long Roll* and *Cease Firing,* her epics of the Civil War. Leaving aside the question of inherited traits and tastes we have to reflect that the father had served in the Confederate army throughout the whole war, gaining promotion to major in the artillery branch. He was wounded many times. He had not been a fire-eater nor an extreme partisan and it was not easy to get him to talk about the war. When he was launched on the subject his excellent military knowledge and his gift for vivid description enabled him to tell a wonderful story. He comprehended strategy and tactics; knew the personal bravery of the leaders on both sides; had seen nearly every aspect of the struggle. His daughter profited.

In Richmond, in the pleasant three-story "city" house with wistaria over the white porch columns, with microphylla rose vines, crinkled pink crape-myrtle, and blossoming magnolias, Miss Johnston worked in a large, airy room fronting southeast and on the second floor. It was full of antique mahogany, books and pictures and not infrequently of friends come in for tea and grouped about a tea table. These invasions were possible in the afternoon. In the morning when the room was sunny Miss Johnston was busy writing or reading proofs or dictating; she had begun

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to dictate much of her work and afterward, at Warm Springs, Virginia, where she went to work upon *The Long Roll* and *Cease Firing,* the rattle of typewriters came to the ears of visitors to the resort like a faint crackling of musketry, an echo of that conflict which they were busied to portray.

Miss Johnston began early to travel. She has spent winters in Egypt, springs in Italy, Southern France; summers in England and Scotland; Sicily, Switzerland and Paris are part of her experience. These journeys have been partly a matter of health. It must never be forgotten in estimating Miss Johnston's achievement that, as with Stevenson, it has been a continual struggle with illness that she has had to go through. Her will has driven her on. Perhaps, as where electricity encounters high resistance, the result has been a brighter, more incandescent flame.

With Richmond as a base the author made many excursions to Virginia resorts, but chiefly to Warm Springs. The cottage that she occupied there was at one time occupied by General Lee. *Lewis Rand* was written on its porch; later she worked there on her Civil War novels. Eventually she built herself a home called Three Hills on a slope half a mile away from Warm Springs and above the hollow in which the settlement lies. Off to the south from Three Hills curves the road to Hot Springs. Do not confuse Warm Springs and Hot Springs, known locally as "The Warm" and "The Hot" and distinguishable because The Warm is hotter than The Hot! Three Hills is a witness to a certain recovery of health for its

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owner, making it possible for Miss Johnston at last to have a permanent home.

There are forty-odd acres, mostly left as nature has disposed them, with here and there a few stone steps to help you up a slope. The house is large, roomy, with enclosed porches and sleeping porches, with segments and adjuncts which make it a large L. Miss Johnston's study gives upon a formal garden centered about a sundial and bird bath of carved stone. Neat brick walks go between hedge plants sent by friends in Holland. Flowers execute the processional of the seasons.

Steps and porches of red brick are set almost level with the grass. The broad hall runs back to the garden and gives upon the study and the sun parlor. Eloise Johnston is her sister's house director. There are jam closets, linen closets and a cedar room. Walled off from the garden are the kitchen and servants' dining-room. The servants, in the style of the South, live in their own cottages. The hospitality of an older South is maintained without abatement.

In a loose cloak, with a stout stick, Miss Johnston tramps the Virginia hills. It is recreation, perhaps, but her mind is always at work. When her body is at work also she sits at a mahogany desk in the study, a cluttered desk, with an apple within reach of her free hand. Panes of leaded glass about the room protect books of every description—history, philosophy, science, most of the literature of suffrage and feminism—a battalion, a regiment of volumes. In one corner two large globes, one terrestrial, the other astronomical; elsewhere a microscope; on the walls

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and mantel shelf copies of favorite pictures and photographs of many friends. The beautiful old chest that used to house a grandmother's linen is full of old magazines and newspapers, ammunition for the author.

Sooner or later some one will undertake the interesting task of going through Virginia and identifying the sites of Miss Johnston's stories. A beginning was made by Alice M. Tyler, writing in the *Book News Monthly* of March, 1911.

"*Prisoners of Hope, To Have and to Hold* and *Audrey* are full of allusions to people, places and events that must cause the least impressionable nature to thrill with patriotic and State pride. Visitors to Jamestown have a newborn desire to pause beside the ruins of a dwelling house where a young daughter of the Jacquelines greeted her guests before going abroad to keep her birthday fête upon the greensward in Audrey's day. At Williamsburg is pointed out a crumbling edifice that in its day represented the earliest theater in the United States, the one in which Audrey played to the gentry who came from the surrounding country with their wives and daughters, eager to witness the antics of the player folk. In the same Old World capital is Bruton Church, representing the scene of another episode in Audrey's life.

"Higher up James River by some miles is Westover, the home of Audrey's fair rival, Evelyn Byrd, whose pink brocade ball gown, a treasured heirloom, recalls to mind the governor's palace in Williamsburg and the official function at which Audrey beheld the radiant Evelyn in the full flush of her loveliness.

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"*Lewis Rand* is of a later date. In its pages the country of the upper James and Richmond come equally into play. The June moon still streams into the ballroom at beautiful Monticello, the home of Thomas Jefferson, as it did when Rand, the untutored, practiced his steps in it, and was admitted to confidential companionship and wardship by its owner. The grasses still wave in the yard of old Saint John's Church, Richmond, where Lewis Rand's wife and her sister worshiped and saw grouped about them the quality of the town in what was then its most aristocratic quarter. The site of the coffee-house on Main Street, where politicians of Rand's party assembled to hear the news and discuss the issues of the times, can still be readily identified. But the tide of prosperity has for years flowed away from Leigh Street section, where the town home of the Rands was said to have been situated, in the midst of neighborly souls who sent in hot dishes for supper on the arrival of Mistress Rand and her husband from their country residence near the State University, in Charlottesville."

There is something to be done also in the way of pedigrees. Miss Unity Dandridge, niece of Col. Churchill in *Lewis Rand,* was the mother of Fauquier Cary in *The Long Roll.* The Churchills, the Carys and others should be charted for us; places, estates, such as Fontenoy, Three Oaks, Greenwood, Silver Hill, should be put beyond peradventure. A decent Baedeker of Virginia will concern itself with all these things.

It is unnecessary and might be tedious to consider at length each of Miss Johnston's books. Until the publication of *Hagar* in 1913 all her work had been

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historical and had consisted, with the exception of *The Goddess of Reason,* of novels whose scenes lay wholly or mostly in Virginia. Her treatment was in the main chronological, the only departure from this being her first two books. *Prisoners of Hope* (1898) was a story of colonial Virginia beginning about 1663; *To Have and To Hold* (1900) is a romance of the Jamestown settlement starting in 1621. Then came *Audrey* (1902) dealing with Virginia in the time of Col. William Byrd and *Lewis Rand* (1908) which pictured the Virginia of Jefferson. *The Long Roll* (1911) and *Cease Firing* (1912) gave us the State during the Civil War. There was another romance, *Sir Mortimer,* between *Audrey* and *Lewis Rand,* and before *The Goddess of Reason,* which was perhaps as near a failure as Miss Johnston could come. Very likely, as suggested by Meredith Nicholson in an article in the *Book News Monthly* of March, 1911, Miss Johnston's preoccupation with the poetic drama of the French Revolution which was to become *The Goddess of Reason* was to blame. *The Goddess of Reason* gave her dramatic genius full play; Julia Marlowe's acting showed it to be something better than a closet drama. In its breadth and splendor this work showed Miss Johnson at her full power, the power which was to give us *The Long Roll* and *Cease Firing* within the next five years.

Although in *The Witch,* her next novel after *Hagar,* our writer went back to Colonial times it was to interpret the present in the light of the past and to show with some of the psychological keenness of *Lewis Rand* and the dramatic action of her earlier books a panorama of prejudice and persecution "spiritually over-

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come by gallant faith and joy of living." *The Fortunes of Garin* (1915) was pure romance and adventure set in Southern France of the time of the Crusades and colored as richly as a tapestry. Garin, of a poor but noble family, ready for a fight or a frolic, fights gloriously in the Holy Land and comes back to France to fight as gloriously in a civil war. In time he finds that the princess in whose defense and behalf he has been battling is the girl whom he rescued from peril years before. Of *The Wanderers* (1917) we have already spoken. *Foes* (1918) is a story of boyhood friendship transformed into lasting hate. The setting is Scotland, before and after the Stuart rebellion crushed at Culloden. The unusual and picturesque story is superbly told in most poetic prose.

How Miss Johnston gets her effects may be illustrated, in closing, by two examples from *The Long Roll.* Illustrated, we say, not *shown* in the sense of enabling any one else to get them. Unless you have her dramatic and imaginative genius you will never be able to take raw material of your own and work a similar magic! Here is Steve Dagg, the coward:

"Steve again saw from afar the approach of the nightmare. It stood large on the opposite bank of Abraham's Creek, and he must go to meet it. He was wedged between comrades—Sergeant Coffin was looking straight at him with his melancholy, bad-tempered eyes—he could not fall out, drop behind! The backs of his hands began to grow cold and his unwashed forehead was damp beneath matted, red-brown elf locks. From considerable experience he knew that presently sick stomach would set in. . . . Seized with

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panic he bit a cartridge and loaded. The air was rocking; moreover, with the heavier waves came a sharp *zzzz-ip! zzzzzz-ip!* Heaven and earth blurred together, blended by the giant brush of eddying smoke. Steve tasted powder, smelled powder. On the other side of the fence, from a battery lower down the slope to the guns beyond him two men were running—running very swiftly, with bent heads. They ran like people in a pelting rain and between them they carried a large bag or bundle, slung in an oilcloth. They were tall and hardy men, and they moved with a curious air of determination. 'Carrying powder! Gawd! before I'd be sech a fool——' A shell came, and burst—burst between the two men. There was an explosion, ear-splitting, heart-rending. A part of the fence was wrecked; a small cedar tree torn into kindling. Steve put down his musket, laid his forehead upon the rail before him, and vomited."

We meet Stonewall Jackson for the first time in the novel's pages:

"First Brigade headquarters was a tree—an especially big tree—a little removed from the others. Beneath it stood a kitchen chair and a wooden table, requisitioned from the nearest cabin and scrupulously paid for. At one side was an extremely small tent, but Brigadier-General T. J. Jackson rarely occupied it. He sat beneath the tree, upon the kitchen chair, his feet, in enormous cavalry boots, planted precisely before him, his hands rigid at his sides. Here he transacted the business of each day, and here, when it was over, he sat facing the North. An awkward, inarticulate, and peculiar man, with strange notions

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about his health and other matters, there was about him no breath of grace, romance, or pomp of war. He was ungenial, ungainly, with large hands and feet, with poor eyesight and a stiff address. There did not lack spruce and handsome youths in his command who were vexed to the soul by the idea of being led to battle by such a figure. The facts that he had fought very bravely in Mexico, and that he had for the enemy a cold and formidable hatred were for him; most other things against him. He drilled his troops seven hours a day. His discipline was of the sternest, his censure a thing to make the boldest officer blanch. A blunder, a slight negligence, any disobedience of orders—down came reprimand, suspension, arrest, with an iron certitude, a relentlessness quite like Nature's. Apparently he was without imagination. He had but little sense of humor, and no understanding of a joke. He drank water and sucked lemons for dyspepsia, and fancied that the use of pepper had caused a weakness in his left leg. He rode a rawboned nag named Little Sorrel, he carried his saber in the oddest fashion, and said 'oblike' instead of 'oblique.' He found his greatest pleasure in going to the Presbyterian Church twice on Sundays and to prayer meetings through the week. Now and then there was a gleam in his eye that promised something, but the battles had not begun, and his soldiers hardly knew what it promised. One or two observers claimed that he was ambitious, but these were chiefly laughed at. To the brigade at large he seemed prosaic, tedious, and strict enough, performing all duties with the exactitude, monotony, and expression of a clock, keeping all plans with the secrecy of

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the sepulcher, rarely sleeping, rising at dawn, and requiring his staff to do likewise, praying at all seasons, and demanding an implicity of obedience which might have been in order with some great and glorious captain, some idolized Napoleon, but which seemed hardly the due of the late professor of natural philosophy and artillery tactics at the Virginia Military Institute. True it was that at Harper's Ferry, where, as Colonel T. J. Jackson, he had commanded until Johnston's arrival, he had begun to bring order out of chaos and to weave from a high-spirited rabble of Volunteers a web that the world was to acknowledge remarkable; true, too, that on the second of July, in the small affair with Patterson at Falling Waters, he had seemed to the critics in the ranks not altogether unimposing. He emerged from Falling Waters Brigadier-General T. J. Jackson, and his men, though with some mental reservations, began to call him 'Old Jack.' The epithet implied approval, but approval hugely qualified. They might have said—in fact, they did say—that every fool knew that a crazy man could fight!"

Now it is perfectly easy to take to pieces these descriptions and the other passages we have cited from Mary Johnston's work. With a little study you may see several things which go far to explain the effectiveness of her passages, some of them things of which she was not directly conscious in writing, things that her experience had taught her and that she attended to automatically, almost without thought.

For example:—

Every word tells. Turn back to the first part of this chapter and notice again in the account of Stonewall

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Jackson's funeral how the focus is narrowed. They bore the dead man past the immortal great and into the Capitol, then into one room of the Capitol, and rested him before a single object in that room. Your eye, which has been ranging widely, is directed to a single point.

Immediately, in the next short paragraph, the opposite effect is struck home. Your eye is lifted from "the calm face, the flag-enshrouded form, lying among lilies" to the Speaker's Chair, symbol of a people's freedom and self-rule, to the room in which the chair stands, the Virginia Hall of Delegates, the forum of an historic and noble State, and then to the building of which this room is a part, the Capitol of the Confederacy, a league of States banded for a cause men will die for. The eye ranges abroad and the mind of the reader grasps the greatness of that cause as he knows its tragic sorrow.

Glance again at the ending of *Lewis Rand*. It is quiet but in the unresolved chord sounded by the boy Michael's words there is the greatest possible spur to the reader's imaginative faculty. "'He said he must have sleep.'" It is placed squarely upon you to construct the picture of the murderer who could not, night or day, close his eyes and lose himself from the secret terror.

Steven Dagg did not have chills up and down his spine. No familiar unpleasant thrill was his but a dreadful cessation within, so that the backs of his hands became cold. He knew he would be sick. And when the shell burst between the two powder carriers he was incapable of feeling at all; purely reflex physical action

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was the most that was possible for him. Fancy his utter numbness! It was too absolute for hysteria; he may be said for the instant to have had no nerves, no mind, no consciousness that could be recognized as such.

The passage in which Miss Johnston acquaints us with Stonewall Jackson has its secret in the precise, scrupulous, neat cataloguing of the man. Every word that could be inflected into an expression of personal opinion is absent. We see just those things about Jackson that those in contact with him noted; some are what we ordinarily consider essentials of description, some are beautifully irrelevant in estimating character. But we are not now after Jackson's character; it is not known! A gleam in his eye was observable, but one "hardly knew what it promised." Of course not! If Miss Johnston, in the light of the present, were to tell us she would destroy the interest we feel in the man. After knowing of him vaguely only as a fine soldier we are making his acquaintance as a queer old codger who may or may not have stuff in him. Of course the fact that we have some historical knowledge of him handicaps us; we can't view him quite as uncertainly and humanly as his men. But Miss Johnston brings us almost to their viewpoint; almost she makes us forget that we know what is coming from the inarticulate figure sitting stiffly under the big tree, sucking lemons for dyspepsia, going stiffly to church, missing the point of the best joke, facing the North. The final touch to make us share his men's incertitude is the

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strict report of their verdict on him—"every fool knew that a crazy man could fight!"

. . . . . .

It is a long and discursive chapter, as we warned you. So much there is to be said about genius, so many ways of saying the same thing! Miss Johnston's novels had sold over 1,000,000 copies *before* the publication of *The Long Roll*, when she had only some six books to her credit and of these only four of a character to make a wide appeal. Is not this in some sort a remarkable vindication of popular taste, of the judgment of the readers whose preferences create the "best sellers"? We think it is and hail it. And her the millions hail.

BOOKS BY MARY JOHNSTON

Prisoners of Hope, 1898.
To Have and to Hold, 1900.
Audrey, 1902.
Sir Mortimer, 1904.
The Goddess of Reason, 1907.
Lewis Rand, 1908.
The Long Roll, 1911.
Cease Firing, 1912.
Hagar, 1913.
The Witch, 1914.
The Fortunes of Garin, 1915.
The Wanderers, 1917.
Foes, 1918.

Published by Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston; except that Sir Mortimer and Foes are published by Harper & Brothers, New York.

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CHAPTER XII

CORRA HARRIS

THEY rise before dawn, gentle souls who find peace in the labor of their hands and in their astonishing faith. They are the silent companions of their husbands. People do not talk much in the valley because there is not much to say. They know the weather, a few psalms, a few golden texts and a few hymns by heart. They also know each other the same way, which is a good deal more than husbands and wives can always claim in this place.

"I do not know a single lazy woman in the valley nor one who is unhappily married. They worry some over the bees when they swarm inopportunely and over the chickens when they take the roup, and over the children when they have a bad cold or do not learn their Sunday school lessons, but they do not worry over their husbands. They are not angry with mankind. As near as I can make out they want better schools and they long for a closer walk with God. But I never knew one to want a limousine or a servant to do her work or a nurse for her baby.

"And you could not put one of these fashionable split corkscrew skirts upon any of them. Call it what you please, evil-mindedness or modesty, but they are as far removed from the fashionable clothes one sees

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upon women in New York as these women would appear to them removed from decency and thrift.

"I do not know how long such a state of sweetness and homely goodness will last there. The feet of youth take hold upon the ways of the world. When I return this spring I may see some girl at the singing school on Sunday afternoon wearing a tight skirt. But I am thankful I have seen what I have of the simple, direct living of these men and women in the valley, whose only problem is to perform the day's work well, to love one another and to believe in God and His mercies."

Thus Corra Harris in the spring of 1914 in New York. It is almost superfluous to say that. No other man or woman of the writers of this country could have uttered the words, because no other American writer has that homely vigor and Biblical phraseology, nor that peculiar directness of uttered thought which can express in one breath the longing for better schools and a closer walk with God, which can contrast the things of the flesh and the things of the spirit in the same sentence. From the day when the first installment of *A Circuit Rider's Wife* appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* it was manifest that America had a new writer of distinction.

The distinction is not so much "literary" as national. Corra Harris's work could be nothing but American. It is racy of the soil, and crusted with unusual and deep personal experience of life. The experience was externally of a rare sort but spiritually of a wide and common and very profound sort. It was an intensive cultivation of the soul that she shared with us and

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we who had had a taste of that experience were able to understand and rejoice in it. For the depths of life are spiritual depths. They are not gained by travel be it ever so wide, nor by exciting worldly adventures. They are plumbed at home, by the fireside, at the supper table, in bed on sleepless nights, in the snatched intervals of exhausting and ordinary toil, in the room where a father lies dying, in the room where two young people are confessing love, in the room where a child is being born.

Corra Harris was born on a typical Southern cotton plantation owned by her father, Tinsley Tucker White, at Farm Hill, Elbert county, Georgia. Her mother had been Mary Elizabeth Matthews. The girl spent her early years on the plantation and was educated at home. Occasionally she made trips to town behind two white mules. When she was 14 she was sent to a local seminary. A few years there joined to the desultory teaching at home gave her what was considered in the South of the late '70s and early '80s (she was born March 17, 1869) a very respectable education—for a girl.

At 17 she was married to Lundy Howard Harris, a young minister. It was his first few years on a Methodist circuit which gave Mrs. Harris the material from which she was able later to construct *A Circuit Rider's Wife*. After two or three years of preaching Mr. Harris became professor of Greek in Emory College, Oxford, Georgia. Then for the first time his wife began to write, using the pen name of Sidney Erskine. She met with no success until she was 25. Then Clark Howell, editor of the Atlanta *Constitution*, pub-

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lished in the *Sunny South* (owned by the *Constitution*) a story of hers called *Darwinkle's Dream.* It was a gruesome story and Mr. Howell made Mrs. Harris rewrite some of it to "give the poor fellow [the hero] a better chance." Gruesome, yes; nevertheless Mrs. Harris's friend, Joel Chandler Harris, creator of Uncle Remus, laughed over what he called the humor of it!

In 1899 Mrs. Harris had a series of articles on the South's problems accepted by the *Independent* magazine. Steady progress, thereafter; she became a contributor to the *Saturday Evening Post* and with the publication of *A Circuit Rider's Wife* reached her deserved place. Her husband died on September 18, 1910. They had been married since 1887.

Mrs. Harris's home is in the "valley" we have heard her describe, not so far from Atlanta and near Pine Log, in Bartow county, Georgia. It is a long, low log cabin with a forest of cathedral palms in front of it. From the west you look down slopes to the crops Mrs. Harris grows, for she is a farmer. The living room around which the house is built was an Indian cabin over a hundred years old. The dining room is in back of the living room and is decorated in yellow browns. Isma Dooley, writing an article which appeared in a number of Southern newspapers, completes the picture:

"The marigolds on the table are a harmonious touch and, as I write, the whole cabin is gold-lighted by the afterglow of the wonderful sunset. Mrs. Harris's own room and sleeping porch are on the first floor. The guest rooms are up a granite rustic stairway—cozy

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apartments done all in blue. A rustic passageway leads to the kitchen and servants' quarters, all of log construction. Mrs. Harris's little study is another adjunct of the cabin and is in the shade of stately pine trees. There are no neighbors within a mile, but Mrs. Harris has a large acquaintance in the county and is devoted to the people and their interests. She told me many things about them as we took a long drive this afternoon behind her stout mule team Blythe and Cobb and driven by Hicks, a colored retainer. [The mules are apparently named in honor of fellow contributors to the *Saturday Evening Post.*]

" 'Good evening, Mrs. Pliney,' said Mrs. Harris, as she greeted an old woman sitting out in front of a typical little country house.

"The woman smiled and responded. 'When I passed here the other day,' said Mrs. Harris, 'and commented on the cosmos blossoms in her yard, she remarked, "Neighbor, you should see them when the wind blows the blossoms; they look like butterflies."

" 'The next morning I heard she had shot that day at one of her neighbors! It shows that a poetic soul and desperation often go together.'

"Here Hicks interrupted in apologetic tones: 'But, Miss Corra, the man she shot at was all the time a-teasin' her dog.' "

At the time of Miss Dooley's visit Mrs. Harris had been for some weeks endeavoring to buy a saddle horse. The author had looked at about twenty-five animals and was contemplating the purchase of a young and beautiful creature having every virtue and grace a horse can have.

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"But," Mrs. Harris remarked, "when I asked the man the price of this paragon he said $100!"

We could wish there were space in this book for the reproduction of some of the letters Mrs. Harris has received since she began writing. They are touching and amusing and altogether extraordinary. Her book *In Search of a Husband,* for instance, brought her an epistle from a young man of 27 who was in search of a wife. Though he had entered the Presbyterian ministry at 15 and had worked his way through college and the theological seminary he was "full of fun" and liked "good shows, music and baseball. I suppose the worst habit I have is smoking." He explained naïvely: "I have visited every place of interest in North America. . . . With all my experience, all my studies and all my theories I ask myself again and again: Do I know what love is?"

Mrs. Harris endeavors to make some answer to all such letters but it must have been a baffling task to frame a reply to a reader whose letter began:

"Often I have noticed that in your metaphers you employ terms used in techical grammer, for instance, in your Circuit Rider's Widow:—'He has never risen above haveing his virtue conjugated in the subjunctive mood.' I naturally inferred that what he did or said was contrary to fact, as that conveyed the substance of the definition of the subjunctive mood. But, you follow up with may, can, must, etc., signs of the Potential mood."

This perplexed and perplexing inquirer went on to praise Mrs. Harris's character drawing.

It is not her character drawing, penetrative and un-

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canny as that is—a man once growled: "This woman knows too much!"—that most distinguishes Mrs. Harris but her irony, her corrosive sanity! Take her plain talk on eugenics.

"During the last ten years that I have been coming to New York I have heard one subject discussed more than any other, more than art, literature, science, politics, society, religion, industry or commerce. This is 'sex,' and the people whom I meet are not decadent. They all harrow it, dissect it with an openness, a Tristram Shandy frankness that would imply they have no personal sense of gender, male or female.

"One very distinguished man who is interested in the problem of sex, not for, but I should say out of the working girls, said this to me:

" 'We want to give these girls the right start sexually.' (It is what nature always gives them, by the way!) 'We are trying to inform them of everything concerning sex. Of everything—destroy their curiosity, you know.'

" 'How will you do it?' I asked.

" 'Why with lectures upon it, with plays dramatizing its dangers, and these moving pictures of the white slave traffic. These are some of the means we are employing.'

" 'I suppose you never thought of marriage,' I suggested. 'That is nature's method.'

" 'Oh, marriage, but you see they can't marry. Men won't have them; not enough men anyhow. Besides a great many of them ought not to marry the kind of men they can and do marry. These very unions breed most of our criminals.'

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"There you have a sample of the intelligence of this place. It is so wrong from beginning to end that no problem of living in it can be solved right. Everybody must therefore beg the question. These girls are not fit to become wives, these men are not fit to become husbands, so they are to be saved by informing them of what they miss in marriage. I doubt if it saves them.

"However, they have got as far as naming the problem 'eugenics.' They hold conventions around about this place to decide how a thoroughbred human animal can be produced. Laws are being passed, or framed for passing, which require a physician's certificate of health from the contracting parties in marriage. It sounds right. It would be right if such laws could be enforced. But they cannot be. You might as well pass a law that smoke shall not rise, that stones shall not fall. When two people love one another that way they will marry whatever their physical rating may be."

When *A Circuit Rider's Widow* was published it was interpreted in some quarters as an attack on Methodism or upon the Methodist Church, South; there were also allegations that Mrs. Harris had been blasphemous in certain passages. The charge of blasphemy was foolish and the conclusion respecting Mrs. Harris's attitude toward Methodism must be modified upon reading her very direct statement:

"I believe in the Methodist church, its doctrines, the liberty and breadth of its original purpose. I believe in Felix Wade [the central figure in *A Circuit Rider's Widow*] as the preacher to come who will deliver this

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church from what is almost a military system of government, menacing to its spiritual power. In short, I believe in the democracy of the religion of Jesus Christ. Such spirituality cannot be properly interpreted by an autocracy nor by a commercialized civilization which we are very rapidly developing in this country."

The reader will be mindful, reading the last sentence, that it was uttered in 1916, a year before America's entrance into the war against Germany.

Mrs. Harris's books require reading, not critical discussion. And having read them the criticism ensuing will not be literary criticism but a criticism of life—which literature is sometimes held to be. In the valley she lives with her daughter Faith, now Mrs. Harry Leech. It should be noted that the acknowledged original of Susan Walton in her book, *The Co-Citizens,* was Mrs. William H. Felton, Georgia's pioneer suffragist, a woman much honored for her public spirit and for public services rendered as a private person, notably the production at the right moments of a scrapbook in which were pasted all sorts of bits of information about officeholders and candidates. Mrs. Felton collected these items for years. She was over 80 when Mrs. Harris wrote her into *The Co-Citizens* and although she lived in Cartersville, near "the valley," the two women did not meet until after the publication of the novel.

No better close for this chapter than its opening—Mrs. Harris's own words! She is picturing her life—and quite as vividly herself—to Isma Dooley. It is after her visit to the European battlefronts. She re-

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vives not what she saw of horror and struggle there, but what she has known of pettiness and greatness in her peaceful home:

"I was so worried over the feuds between the brethren and the choir and my own fault-finding spirit that I used to go round behind the church sometimes and sit down among the graves to comfort myself.

"We have buried our people there for sixty years. Men who never could get on with each other in the church are lying side by side, like brothers in the same bed. I say it encourages me to know that the time will come when we, too, will finish our day's work and the strife with which we test each other's spirits, and lie down out there like the lion and the lamb, together. But we shall be dead, which, in my opinion, is the only safe way for lions and lambs to lie down together.

"I'd sit there and watch the fallen autumn leaves come whirling and tipping over the tombs like little brown spirits of the dust, blown in the wind. I thought of what a good man old Amos Tell was, though nobody could get on with him in the church. But his contrariness didn't count now in my thoughts. I only remembered how he bore the burdens of the church; how cross, but generous he was with the poor; how he made the coffin for Molly Brown's husband and didn't charge for it. Then I'd bend down and pull a few weeds from among the violets that grew round his monument, as I'd have dusted his coat for him after a long journey. And I would walk over and look at John Elrod's fine tomb—John, who didn't know whether he was willing to be a fool for Christ's

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sake and who surpassed the wise in the simplicity of his faith.

"I'd look down at Abbie Carmichael's grave as I passed—such a dingy little grave, with such a meek little monument over it. We used to think she was a great trial in the missionary society, always wanting to turn it into a spiritual meeting instead of attending to the business and collecting dues. She was hungry for the bread of life from morning till night. Now she was satisfied, with her dust lying so close to the roots of the great trees. People look better when you remember them after they are gone, and you do not need to contend with just their mortal frailties; and you wonder why you ever put so much stress on them anyhow.

"I always feel as if I can bear with the living more patiently after I've spent an hour in this churchyard and seen how far removed the dead are from their transgressions."

BOOKS BY CORRA HARRIS

A Circuit Rider's Wife, 1910.
Eve's Second Husband, 1911.
The Recording Angel, 1912.
In Search of a Husband, 1913.
The Co-Citizens, 1915.
A Circuit Rider's Widow, 1916.
Making Her His Wife, 1918.

The first two books are published by Henry Altemus, Philadelphia; the rest by Doubleday, Page & Company, New York.

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CHAPTER XIII

Mary Austin

[Spellings and punctuation, even though inadvertent, have been faithfully transcribed for the sake of preserving something intensely human in the personal sketch below.]

[Typewritten] Independence, Cal.
Nov. 25th, 1902.

Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin and Co.;

Gentlemen,

Enclosed you will find the biographical sketch of my life and some account of my work, in reply to your request for the same. I have no doubt that you can get some expression of opinion from Mr. Muir in regard to my book "A Land of Little Rain". but I will take pains to make sure of the matter and write you again in regard to it. Chas. F. Lummis, editor of Out West, and George Hamlin Fitch, literary editor of The San Fransisco Chronicle, and also the reviewer of the Argonaut can be counted on to give me some friendly notice, especially Lummis as he is my first and warmest friend in the west. . . . I have written the biographical sketch in the third person to avoid the use of so many "I's," which always makes me

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miserable, you can cut out all that is not to the point.

Sincerely yours

MARY AUSTIN.

[Written]

P. S. I am afraid you will be disappointed with the notes but it is the best I can do.

[Enclosure. Typewritten]

Mary Hunter Austin was born in Carlinville, Illinois, descended on her mother's side from the family of the celebrated French chemist, Daguerre. Being born fortunately before the flood of so-called children's books, she began to be familiar with the English classics as soon as she could read, and the study of these and an intimate acquaintance with nature occupied most of the years until the end of her university work. At that time very serious ill health drove her to California, and a friendly destiny provided that she should settle in the new and untamed lands about the Sierra Nevadas and the desert edges. Although not yet twenty, she had already made some preparation for following the profession of teaching, and in the unconventional life of mining towns, and in the wickiups of the Indians found exceptional opportunities for pushing her investigations in child-study.

Mrs. Austin's work in this direction met with instant recognition in her state, and before long many excellent positions were open to her, but by this time she discovered that she did not want them. Like most desert dwellers, Mrs. Austin had come under the spell of its mystery, and after teaching a short time in the Los Angeles Normal School, was glad to return to the

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life of the hills, and soon after began to devote herself seriously to writing.

Very early her work attracted the attention of The Atlantic Monthly, St. Nicholas, and the Youth's Companion. Most of the monthly magazines have published work of hers.

All of Mary Austin's work is like her life, out of doors, nights under the pines, long days' watchings by water holes to see the wild things drink, breaking trail up new slopes, heat, cloud bursts, snow, wild beast and mountain bloom, all equally delightful because understood.

[At this point the typewriting stops; the "biographical notes" continue in pen and ink, Mrs. Austin writing on both sides of the sheets of paper.]

N. B. I can't do it, when I wrote the letter that accompanies this I thought it would be easy to do, but it isn't. There is really nothing to tell. I have just *looked,* nothing more, when I was too sick to do anything else I could lie out under the sage brush and look, and when I was able to get about I went to look at other things, and by and by I got to know when and where looking was most worth while. Then I got so full of looking that I had to write to get rid of some of it to make room for more. I was only two months writing "A Land of Little Rain" but I spent 12 years peeking and prying before I began it. After a while I will write a book about my brother the coyote which will make you "sit up," I mean that is the way I feel about it.

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I have considered a long while, to see if I have any interesting excentricities such as make people want to buy the books of the people who have them, but I think not. You are to figure to yourself a small, plain, brown woman with too much hair, always a little sick, and always busy about the fields and the mesas in a manner, so they say in the village, as if I should like to see anybody try to stop me.

Years ago I was a good shot, but as I grew more acquainted with the ways of wild folks I found it lie heavy on my conscience and so latterly have given it up. I have a house by the rill of Pine creek, looking toward Kearsarge, and the sage brush grows up to the door. As for the villagers they have accepted me on the same basis as the weather, an institution which there is no use trying to account for. Two years ago I delivered the Fourth of July oration here, and if, when there is no minister of any sort here, as frequently happens, I go and ring the church bell, they will come in to hear me in the most natural manner.

When I go out of this valley (Owens) to attend or to talk to large educational gatherings I ride 130 miles in the stage across the desert to Mojave, and the driver lets me hold the lines. Once when he said the water of Mojave made him sick, I put him inside and took the stage in from Red Rock to Coyote Holes. The other passengers who were a barber with a wooden leg, and a Londoner, head of a mining syndicate, took care of my baby. You see I was the only one who knew how to drive four horses.

For a long time before I came to Independence, I lived in Lone Pine where the population is two-thirds

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Mexican and there gained the knowledge of their character which informs many of my stories. I should say that my husband who is Register of the U. S. Land office, is also a botanist and much of my outdoor life is by way of assisting his field work.

Now for my work—the best is "A Land of Little Rain," and the child verse in the St. Nicholas. I think the best and worst of it is that I am a little too near to my material. Where I seem to skimp a little, I can understand now that the book is cold, it was only that I presupposed a greater knowledge in the reader. During the last six months I have discovered that the same thing is happening to me that I complained of in Jimville.—the desert has "struck in." But I shall do better work, and still better. I am pleased to learn through some of my editor friends that my verse is rather better paid for and more widely copied than the average product of verse makers, and I conceive it possible that this might be traced to the influence of Piute and Shoshone medicine men and Dancers who are the only poets I personally know. For consider how I get nearer to the root of the poetic impulse among these single-hearted savages than any other where. But if I write at length upon this point you will say with my friend Kern River Jim, "This all blame foolishness." And this brings me to my work among the Indians in which I am somewhat generally misrepresented. If I deny what is commonly reported, that the Indians regard me worshipfully for the good I do, then is the denial taken for modesty which it is not, but merely truth. They tell me things because I am really interested and a little for the sake

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of small favors but mostly because I give them no rest until they do. Says my friend Kern River Jim, "What for you learn them Injun songs? You can't sing um, You go learn songs in a book, that's good enough for you." Nevertheless I have been able to do them nearly as much good as they have done me.

This is the best I can do for you in this way,—but whatever you are minded to say of my work say this —that I have been writing only four or five years and have not yet come to my full power, nor will yet for some years more.

. . . . . .

So wrote Mary Austin in late fall, 1902. Very nearly a year later Houghton Mifflin Company published *The Land of Little Rain,* a collection of fourteen sketches that were read with admiration and joy, that are re-discovered every year, that established incontestably Mary Austin's qualifications as a writer.

"East away from the Sierras, south from Panamint and Amargosa, east and south many an uncounted mile, is the Country of Lost Borders.

"Ute, Paiute, Mojave, and Shoshone inhabit its frontiers, and as far into the heart of it as a man dare go. Not the law, but the land sets the limit. Desert is the name it wears upon the maps, but the Indian's is the better word. Desert is a loose term to indicate land that supports no man; whether the land can be bitted and broken to that purpose is not proven."

The reader draws in his breath sharply. This is a *writer!* And she has style. Yes, but so have dozens of others. And they never do anything with it. They

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write charming little essays, fanciful, forgotten. What else has she?

She has keen eyes, a keen mind, a heart to understand and a silence and time to come to the understanding. This much you make sure of as you go deeper into the book, reading the accounts of *The Pocket Hunter* and *Jimville: A Bret Harte Town.* When you have finished you know Mrs. Austin's promise but unless you have read her later books you do not know her performance.

It began right after the appearance of *The Land of Little Rain* with her next work, the novel *Isidro,* a romance dealing with the California of the padres, and it reached its high and sustained level with *A Woman of Genius.*

She did not remain on the edge of the desert. To do so would have been fatal. She moved about and with benefit to herself and her work. Now she lives in a house facing on Gramercy Park, New York, where she has a studio. She has exchanged the Mojave desert for the desert of Manhattan, but she is sheltered in an oasis touched with the lingering loveliness of the New York H. C. Bunner knew. Ask her about the advantages of her new environment and she will tell you a story:

"A young Californian who came East to try his fortune gravitated naturally to Washington Square where Genius is supposed to germinate. He was personally conducted to the Liberal Club where a young woman in bobbed hair and a futurist dress asked him if he didn't think the Liberal Club the most remarkable thing in America.

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"'Well,' said the Westerner, 'there's the Grand Canyon, you know.'

"There you have it," concludes Mrs. Austin. "If you haven't seen the Grand Canyon you had better keep away from the Liberal Club; but once you have caught the lift and bigness of America outside New York, then New York is the most inspiring place in the world in which to work."

Ask her about her fine novel *The Ford,* a story of present day California which takes its title from a river shallow where the boy Kenneth Brent rescues a lamb from drowning:

"The book records incidents in my own life in the struggle for the waters of Owens River which the city of Los Angeles stole from us," Mrs. Austin explains. "That was a very wicked episode, and I did not begin to do justice to the chicanery of Los Angeles. I am saving some of these things for the sequel to *The Ford*! It was I who discovered and made public the attempt of the city to secure the surplus rights of the river in just such fashion as I have described Anne and Kenneth Brent doing in the book."

We have had Mary Austin's portrait of herself in 1902; let us have a portrait of her by a visitor who met her about that time. Elia W. Peattie, writing in the Boston *Transcript,* supplies just those externals that we need to round out our picture:

"I met another desert woman, too [she had been describing a visit to Ida Meacham Strobridge]—Mary Austin, who has within the last eighteen months appeared twice in the *Atlantic* in sketches which could

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have been written only by one who knows the solitude and understands it. *A Shepherd of the Sierras* and *The Little Coyote* were the titles of these stories. She has also written much verse and of a peculiar order. It is for children, and has a wild and curious quality. This has appeared chiefly in the *Youth's Companion* and *St. Nicholas.*

"Mary Austin lives down in Independence, where her husband is Government land agent. She is fairly on the edge of Death Valley, and her companions are principally Piute Indians. . . . Mrs. Austin has an Indian-like solemnity about her. She has a pervading shyness and likes the philosophy of the Indians and their poetry. Instinctively she is artistic in all she does, and her writing has undeniable style as well as remarkable individuality. Her paper on *The Indian Arts* read at one of the art sessions of the biennial meeting of the General Federation of Women's Clubs was the most purely literary paper of the entire convention. It was written too well, if anything. It was so smooth that it failed to arrest the attention of the more casual listeners. . . .

"All that Mrs. Austin says has a certain value. She speaks seldom. Her utterance is rather slow, her voice very soft, and her remarks are usually grave. . . . The desert has cloistered her; she is a religieuse, serving her kind, wearing no habit, subscribing to no creed."

A bit of a purple patch, that last! The truth is that the desert molded Mary Austin without stunting her. She is like one of those desert plants of which she tells us, whose maturity may be attained at ten feet or

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four inches, according to moisture and the region in which they grow. Herself, she is a desert species—but transplanted in time! She made her final escape before the desert "struck in" too deeply; had she not done so dwarfing would have been inescapable; instead of the ten-foot maturity she would have given us her best—her all, her completion—at four inches.

She has been lucky, yes, but not beyond her deserving. The *Atlantic* which printed her first offerings was, you will remember, the same *Atlantic* which gave Jack London his first chance. The Boston magazine seldom prints serials, how seldom may be gathered from the fact that five years elapsed after the appearance of Mary S. Watts's *Van Cleve* before the "continued" line footed one of its pages. Yet the *Atlantic* serialized *Isidro*. The *North American Review,* no less severely selective than the *Atlantic,*—the *North American,* which had printed serially novels by Henry James and Joseph Conrad, elected to print Mary Austin's *The Man Jesus* month by month. *The Man Jesus* is a biography such as none but an American steeped in the wilderness, steeped in fine literature, with a deeply developed reflective habit could have written. It might almost have been predicted from a woman who remarked in 1904, who threw out in the course of a casual lecture the arresting words: "Most of the great religions have originated in desert countries."

If we say that *The Man Jesus* called for unusual knowledge and an unusual faculty, what shall we say of *A Woman of Genius?* Some readers were doubtless shocked by this novel on its first appearance; the number must be smaller to-day. It is as honest as

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George Meredith and as finely wrought as anything by Henry James. Genius, in the experience of Olivia Lattimore, a superb actress of tragic rôles, is a gift, a possession in the sense in which we say that a man or a woman "is possessed of"—or by—a devil. Living in Chicago on 85 cents a week was not only not in any way important to her artistic development, it was actually "a foolish and unnecessary interference with my business of serving you anew with entertainment." In other words, the people who think that poverty and heartbreak are inevitable in the case of a person of genius, are even desirable or requisite for the growth and flowering of that genius, are a pack of silly souls. Worse than that, they are guilty souls; for their attitude allows misery and wretchedness to befall the gifted mortal to such an extent that the wonder is the world has any geniuses at all, or any who survive to reveal what is in them.

And so Mrs. Austin makes her Olivia Lattimore bare her life for us pretty completely. It is an austere and serious revelation.

"About a week before my wedding we were sitting together at the close of the afternoon; my mother had taken up her knitting, as her habit was when the light failed. . . . On the impulse I spoke.

" 'Mother,' I said, 'I want to know . . .?'

"It seemed a natural sort of knowledge to which any woman had a right. Almost before the question was out I saw the expression of offended shock come over my mother's reminiscent softness. . . .

" 'Olivia! Olivia!' She stood up, her knitting rigid in her hands, the ball of it speeding away in the dusk

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of the floor on some private terror of its own. 'Olivia, I'll not hear of such things! You are not to speak of them, do you understand! I'll have nothing to do with them!'

" 'I wanted to know,' I said. 'I thought you could tell me. . . .'"

But the question "had glanced in striking the dying nerve of long since encountered dreads and pains. We faced them together there in the cold twilight.

" 'I'm sorry, daughter'—she hesitated—'I can't help you. I don't know . . . I never knew myself.' "

We follow the girl through marriage, the birth of a son and his death in infancy, the almost accidental disclosure of her gift for the stage, her struggle with her husband, the gradual breach between them and his defection involving the village dressmaker, the long and harrowing period in Chicago after his death when Olivia was without work, without money and often without hope. Success came, of course; it takes death itself to extinguish genius such as she possessed, "of which I was for the moment the vase, the cup." The finest thing in this remarkable story is the portrayal of that last struggle between Olivia and Helmeth Garrett in which the woman's gift (or possession) bests even love. But the chapters on Olivia's childhood are wonderfully penetrating glimpses into the mind of a young girl and the depiction of other characters is of a high order; one of the best being the sketch of Olivia's brother, Forester, "Forrie," who made a vocation, a life work, of the business of being a dutiful son. *A Woman of Genius* is the work of a woman of genius.

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"Whatever you are minded to say of my work say this—that I . . . have not yet come to my full power." You knew, Mrs. Austin. And now we all know.

BOOKS BY MARY AUSTIN

Love and the Soul-Maker, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.

The Green Bough. Doubleday, Page & Company, New York.

The Land of the Sun, Houghton Mifflin.

The Land of Little Rain, 1903. Houghton Mifflin.

The Basket Woman, 1904. Houghton Mifflin.

Isidro, 1905. Houghton Mifflin.

The Flock, 1906. Houghton Mifflin.

Santa Lucia, 1908. Harper & Brothers, New York.

Lost Borders, 1909. Houghton Mifflin.

The Arrow Maker, 1911. Doubleday, Page.

Christ in Italy, 1911. Doubleday, Page.

A Woman of Genius, 1912. Doubleday, Page.

The Lovely Lady, 1913. Doubleday, Page.

The Man Jesus, 1915. Houghton Mifflin.

The Ford, 1917. Houghton Mifflin.

The Young Woman Citizen, 1918. The Womans Press, New York.

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CHAPTER XIV

MARY S. WATTS

"2722 Cleinview Avenue, East Walnut Hills,
"Cincinnati, Ohio, June 19, 1918.

"My dear Mr. Overton:

"I HAVE here a letter from Mr. Latham of Macmillans with a very complimentary request from you for data regarding myself. There really is not much to say about me as a person. The trade of writing has been pursued—in times past, at least—by so many picturesque people in so picturesque a fashion that the rest of the world has got into the habit of thinking an author must of necessity be picturesque; but such is not my case, rather to my regret whenever anybody displays this kind and gratifying curiosity about me. One would dearly love to be a slap-dash, swashbuckling sort of person like Borrow, say; or a sick, fiery, indomitable R. L. S. Then there would be something to write about. As it is, I am only an inconspicuous gentlewoman—I hope a gentlewoman anyway!—with a more or less Victorian style of writing which has frequently proved a profound puzzle to critics of a younger generation.

"The dates are to be got out of *Who's Who,* but to spare trouble I will give them here. Born, 1868; brought up on an old farm in central Ohio; went to

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school at the Convent of the Sacred Heart in Cincinnati for some two or three years; married 1891; lived in Cincinnati ever since. Of all these events, the being brought up on that old farm is probably the greatest asset for the literary career. The other things happen to everybody, but the farm experience was *sui generis*, not exactly like anything else, least of all like the farm-life you read about and involuntarily picture. My people moved to this country home about the middle of the last century, when it was only a few years removed from the wilderness; I think the farm was the remnant of a comfortable patrimony which in the well-tried old phrase had been 'run through'; I think it was a last resort, refuge, stronghold; but these were things which were not talked about in the family. I can see now that the life I was made to live as a child was very strange. Here we all were, educated people with traditions and sophisticated ideas, set down amongst actual backwoodsmen, whom the older members of the family looked upon, without the least idea of being snobbish, as peasants. They really were a wild, uncouth lot; there were grown men and women who could not read and write. Of course that is all over now; education, the railroads, the *Ladies' Home Journal* have changed everything. Don't think I am not serious in mentioning that final item: I sincerely believe that the so-called women's magazines have done more for these backward and isolated communities than all the other preachers and teachers put together. But the point of telling all this intimate history is to make you understand the loneliness of my upbringing as a child; my sister and I had no companions of our own

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age; we were not allowed to associate with the country children. We must have been queer little fish. We had to make up our own games, and we played stories out of books, taking all the characters in turn.

"The Ohio countryside is not romantic as to landscape; nevertheless, it has a kind of comfortable charm; I have described it pretty accurately in *Nathan Burke.* In my day there were still passenger-pigeons by the uncounted thousands, and of course quail, gray squirrels, and other kinds of game in like abundance. There was an old man—at least I thought him old then—named Ben Rhodes, who used to make his living shooting and trapping, and who was, in fact, the last of the pioneers. He wore a coon-skin cap with the bushy tail hanging down his back; and butternut-dyed clothes. He could shoot a squirrel through the eye with a rifle—a *rifle,* mind you!—at the utmost distance the weapon would carry. 'Yeh waste a power o' powder 'n' shot with them thar shot-guns,' he would say. 'Yeh taken twenty shot when *one* orter do.' I remember him sitting on our back-porch, chewing tobacco, and skinning squirrels, the last an operation of hideous dexterity. You rip the animal down the front, and then after certain swift and mysterious performances with Ben's hunting-knife which was always horribly bright and keen, fit to scalp people with, you take hold of the ears, you set your foot on the tail, and with one infallible, quick jerk you somehow or other turn it inside out and there in a trice is the furry pelt intact, and there the dreadful skinless corpse of the squirrel with all its muscles showing, red and slick and shining! I never see a squirrel without think-

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ing of Ben, who was a foot-loose creature and wandered off at last, and died somewhere, much like the wild things he hunted. If I have been particular to describe him here, it is because thirty years afterwards I wrote about him and called him Jake Darnell; and in all the writings I have done for which I have time and again been accused of having taken living models, he is absolutely the only actual portrait. I could not have imagined Ben; one must be born and brought up in the backwoods of Ohio to know what manner of man he was. This answers, out of its order, to be sure, one of your questions, that is: to what extent are my novels autobiographical or reminiscent of real persons? Except as regards Ben, they are not at all reminiscent of any one real person, and nothing I have ever written has reflected my own life, consciously at least. An author, I think, in picturing his own world, as seen through his own eyes, may easily tell more about himself than he knows.

"This also, I perceive, answers another question: what is my method of accumulating material? I find I have none. The material seems to present itself or to be gathered up and packed away without conscious effort in some store-house of memory. I can almost always go to this garret, turn over the junk, and haul out what I want. It generally needs some making over, piecing and patching, to be sure, but there is always something there that will serve. I have never had to make a memorandum, as I understand many authors do, of likely phrases, telling words, and so on, never sketched out a scene or plot, never got up in the middle of the night, or hopped off an omnibus

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to rush after a scrap of paper and pencil in order to 'jot down' some immortal thought. The only thing I do sometimes 'jot down' is the chronology of the narrative; John McGinnis and Mary Dill are married at such-and-such a date; then, will their son, Dill McGinnis, be fifteen at such-and-such a date? I never know, and have to count up on my fingers, and generally revise the schedule afterwards; and I have been caught up pretty sharply by the unprofessional critics who volunteer criticism in letters to authors, for being as much as twenty years out in my figures, or for making contradictory statements. The sole excuse I have to offer is that I can't count, and never got any farther than six times eight, which I believe makes forty-eight, in the multiplication-table. Invincible ignorance, in other words, must be my salvation!

"As to my 'first writings,' I shared one quality with R. L. S. at any rate; I knew they were trash. They were mostly short stories which went and came between me and the magazine-editors with a pendulum-like regularity; I used to work furiously over these things, and always sent them off with the highest hopes, and yet received them back with no deep disappointment. At the bottom of my heart, I say, I knew they were trash. What I did not know was that, in very truth, I should never write anything but trash, no matter how widely it got printed and published; I was forever expecting some day to 'do it' and sit down satisfied; I am still expecting that miracle and all the while I know it will not happen. Some of those far-traveled short stories have since been rewritten and published, and some incorporated in nov-

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els, and some are still in the back of my mind waiting their hour of usefulness. When I began, the influence of Stevenson was still very strong, and Mr. Weyman and Mr. Hope-Hawkins, to say nothing of Rider Haggard and the incomparable Sherlock Holmes, were in the middle of their popularity. Where are the roses of yester-year? We will always read Stevenson, but we realize now that he was a writer—just that. And he was a great personality—just that. Everybody, including myself, used strenuously to imitate him, and I think it didn't do us any harm; he preached better than he practiced, and after some toiling after him, we found that out, but our toil was not thrown away. I will say, in self-glorification, that after I got through imitating Stevenson, I did not start in and imitate O. Henry, or Mr. Rudyard Kipling; and few are the writers who can honestly make that boast! About that time, it became manifest to me that the thing to do was not to muddle around with romance, ancient or modern, but to write about people, and to 'lie like the truth.' I remember reading Thackeray, and being struck with the profitable use of the conversational style in 'lying like the truth'; I don't mean 'chatty' and I don't mean colloquial, and I don't mean that easy slinging about of words which the new writers affect; I mean *conversational,* as conversation is carried on between persons in what I shall call for want of a better term good society. But what puzzled me about Thackeray was that there were occasional passages, of considerable extent, wherein he was not conversational at all; he was writing like somebody else, but it still had the most

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amazing verisimilitude; it was so plausible that you believed it just as you believe the morning paper. It was in *Barry Lyndon* that this first struck me, I believe. Who showed him that trick? He is forever talking about Fielding, but upon re-reading the latter I saw it was not Fielding he was imitating. Thackeray, in breezy parlance, can give Fielding cards and spades. After a while, in a moment of illumination, I found him out. The wily old genius was not bothering his head about Fielding; the man he was modeling upon was Daniel Defoe; that's where he got that simplicity which did not hesitate at times to be prosy, well aware that a plain true narrative has always the defect of its quality, monotony, repetition, a tedious dwelling on detail. There is nothing in fiction better imagined or imagined with more veracity than the pitiful importance which his efforts at braiding baskets, and making pottery vessels, assume to the castaway Robinson in his solitude, and yet it is not vividly interesting reading. There is nothing—also—better imagined than George Warrington's escape from Fort Duquesne, with the help of the Indian squaw; but it is rather tiresome, on the whole; and the final touch where the poor squaw, instead of turning out a lovely, romantic Pocahontas, becomes a perfect nuisance when they reach the settlements, getting drunk and creating scandal—that is a masterpiece of realism; and we all hate to know about it! Re-reading Defoe, and reading Thackeray more carefully, with side excursions, as it were, into reading Swift and Mr. Thomas Hardy, it seemed to me that I might eventually learn the trick. I take it that I have actually succeeded once or twice

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by the fact that nobody will believe that I have ever invented a single person or incident! People are eternally wanting to know who was the original of this or that character, or what is worse, identifying characters with somebodies whom, ten to one, I have never laid eyes on! Others have insisted that they knew very well I was cutting the tale out of whole cloth, but that I had no 'vision,' was 'too photographic,' etc. It may well be so; my cup is very small, and I must drink out of it, willy-nilly. The critics, as I have said, were rather put to it for something to say, when I appeared; most of them adopted a cautious, middle-of-the-road policy; you see I *might* turn out to be a writer after all, with my bewildering deliberation, my 'careless fluency'—I have seen this phrase used in description of my writing—my emphasis of the commonplace. Of late years, I think they have got used to me; for that matter, when all's said and done, my contributions to literature are not of such importance as to arrest a critic long.

"I see one of the questions relates to travels. Mine have been about as those of the average citizen, except that one or two were undertaken in search of material. For example, I went to Mexico when writing *Nathan Burke,* as the hero is supposed to take part in the Mexican War. And while at work on *Van Cleve,* a story in which the Spanish-American War makes a kind of fugitive entrance and exit, I went to Cuba, and down to Santiago. I might possibly have 'faked up' these stories without the trouble of the journey; it would be as easy to do that as to imagine society and the world fifty or a hundred years ago, which I

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have also done—that is to say, not easy at all; nothing is easy—but I could have done it. However, I prefer to make some attempt at getting the atmosphere.

"The dates of publication are about as follows: *The Tenants* (McClure), 1908; *Nathan Burke* (Macmillan), 1910; *The Legacy,* 1911; *Van Cleve: His Friends and His Family,* published serially in the *Atlantic Monthly,* 1912, in book form by Macmillan, 1913; *The Rise of Jennie Cushing,* 1915; *The Rudder,* 1916; *The Boardman Family,* 1918; also a book called *Three Short Plays,* 1917.

"I cannot let this go without adding a word of protest—whether in your judgment it is fit to make public or not—about the people who in printed criticism, or in private letters and conversations, insist on attributing to me the words I put into the mouths of my characters, and the thoughts I put into their heads. I make a man designedly weak and futile, or idle, or dull, or small-minded; I make him say or do something which precisely exhibits his weakness, or futility, or idleness, or dullness, or meanness; how else shall the reader know this man than by his own mouth, by his own deeds? Is it not so that we know one another? A character in a book must act and speak in his part; he ought never to become even for one instant the mouthpiece of the author; he is, in a sense, as much a stranger to the author, as much a different and distinct personality, as he is to the reader. Then why, when I make a man say: 'There is no God,' and moreover, go to work and express this opinion in a dozen ways, by every act and thought of his career, why

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do people accuse *me* of being an atheist? At that rate, if I invented a burglar, I'd first have to be a burglar myself! Nobody ever gives me credit for the kind, intelligent, temperate, decent people I create; it's only the disagreeable ones, apparently, that I am accountable for. What have I got to do with it? I merely imagine a character such as we meet with every day of our lives, put him into a certain environment, or submit him to certain circumstances, and then see what happens. 'By their fruits ye shall know them,' and 'Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh' give me the best of authorities for this method; whole pages of description cannot illuminate the reader as much as one unguarded sentence from the lips of a character. But why accuse *me* of his sentiments? I'm only turning a searchlight on him. The thing is exasperating, not less so because it is a sort of left-handed tribute to the verisimilitude I am always striving after. In the preface to one of his books the late Mr. William de Morgan speaks his mind earnestly about the same kind of injustice; and I am further reminded of a story about Thackeray, who, on being reproached for 'making So-and-So and Such-a-One act that way,' retorted: 'Why, Good Lord, *I* didn't do it. They did it themselves!' So, if I err, at least I err in good company.

"This letter is already too long. With very many thanks, and best wishes for the forthcoming book, I am

"Sincerely yours,

"MARY S. WATTS."

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Mrs. Watts's candor should be attended by an equal candor on the part of the compiler of this book. Of course, despite the reporter's rôle to which he endeavors pretty scrupulously to stick throughout these pages, he has his personal preferences; his readers have a right to know something about them if only that they may discount his statements at their own intellectual rates of exchange. What we have to say about Mrs. Watts may properly be prefaced, then, with the admission that, on the whole, we (a strictly editorial we) have received more permanent pleasure and satisfaction from her novels than from those of any other American woman. Let us try to make clear the grounds for this satisfaction and let us also try to place before the reader the solid merits of her work.

Thackeray and Defoe, as she makes clear, have been most important of all writers to her; and she admired in Thackeray the conversational style with which he told his story; in Defoe she found the key to that non-conversational, simple, rather prosy, repetitive, completely realistic method of relation which is the best treatment in certain passages and which affords the reader—and the writer—necessary relief. But neither Thackeray nor Defoe, nor Swift, Hardy or any other had been able to help Mrs. Watts had she not possessed certain gifts evidenced in every one of her stories.

She can see a character through and through. By that we mean she can not only conceive a person, but she can tell what he would do in any set of circumstances soever. Just how wonderful this is you have only to stop a moment and reflect to understand. Take

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any person whom you know particularly well—do you know what he would do if he suddenly lost all his money, or his job; if he suddenly became rich; if his wife left him; if his father were murdered; if this; if that? You hesitate and well you may; and yet you think you know *him* rather well! The truth is, you know only certain aspects of him; you have never read his mind or heart and established the existence or absence of certain traits of character which will infallibly determine his action in any event that may befall. You've never done that—why should you? But you must do just that if you are going to write a novel, and not with one person, but with half a dozen; moreover, your person, when it comes to writing, isn't somebody you can study in flesh and blood, at least, not in Mrs. Watts's case, for Jake Darnell is her only actual portrait.

Mrs. Watts has in a high degree what has been called the "fine malice" of feminine perception, a quality which makes *Pride and Prejudice* immortal whether we like it or not; this is not malice in the sense of hating or grudging or even disliking the people about you. It is merely a faculty for noticing insignificant details which, when assembled, constitute a merciless betrayal—the betrayal is merciless whether it is favorable to the subject or not. Where Joseph Conrad, for example, makes you envisage a man as a single dominant trait, Mrs. Watts makes you see him as a bundle of contradictions. The difference in method is extreme, but both methods are indispensable. Conrad supplies the key to an otherwise unreadable soul; Mrs. Watts takes the soul that you read too readily

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as that of a person upon a single thing intent and breaks it up for you, splits it into a dozen shades of meaning and purpose as the prism refracts white light into a whole spectrum of colors.

She has further the largeness of mind and tolerant humor to study all and understand all and set everything down with unfailing gusto. Nothing is too mean or too shabby, too pretentious or too lofty for her eyes and her pen. She delineates insufferable young men like George Ducey in *Nathan Burke* and Everett Boardman in *The Boardman Family* whom Gene Stratton-Porter would not touch with a pitchfork and whom Edith Wharton could never render adequately. But Lord! these young men must be of some use in the world, we can fancy Mrs. Watts saying with a smile, else it's not likely they'd be here! The fact that they are here and have to be reckoned with is enough. Let us see what is to be made of them. And she proceeds to show us what *is* made of them—not a pretty spectacle, to be sure, not pointing a clear moral, maybe, but worth our while if only to remind us of what we don't know. We suspect that Mrs. Watts would subscribe without reservation to Conrad's notion that trying to find the moral of our existences is in the main futile. Do you recall his words in *A Personal Record*?

"The ethical view of the universe involves us at last in so many cruel and absurd contradictions, where the last vestiges of faith, hope, charity, and even of reason itself, seem ready to perish, that I have come to suspect that the aim of creation cannot be ethical at all. I would fondly believe that its object is purely spec-

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tacular: a spectacle for awe, love, adoration, or hate, if you like, but in this view—and in this view alone—never for despair! Those visions, delicious or poignant, are a moral end in themselves. The rest is our affair—the laughter, the tears, the tenderness, the indignation, the high tranquillity of a steeled heart, the detached curiosity of a subtle mind—that's our affair!"

It is, O master! Mrs. Watts has always made it very much her affair, from *Nathan Burke* to the present hour. In her is laughter, as when, in *The Rudder*, Marshall Cook, the author, inspects the plant of Amzi Loring, the "ice king." Mr. Loring is a self-made man. Cook watches the machinery spill blocks of ice weighing 300 pounds each.

" 'Beautifully clear! I was just thinking it was like a great glass box,' said Cook. 'It had no look of being solid.'

" 'Um-huh. Well, I *have* seen things put inside it,' said the other, sly anticipation suddenly appearing on his features. He nodded significantly to the puller; and presently with another clang, another wail of escaping air, there boomed down upon the runway and fled past them another three hundred pounds with a dark object embedded in the middle of it, at sight of which Cook gave an exclamation.

" 'What!' he shouted, rushing to peer after it.

" 'I told 'em to save out that cake and send it up to the house for you,' said Amzi One, smiling, well-pleased. 'You'll see it again when you get home.' "

A copy of Mr. Cook's latest book had been frozen in the ice cake.

" 'Mr. Loring,' said Cook solemnly. He paused,

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swallowing with a mighty effort, even some slight contortion of the facial muscles. . . . 'Mr. Loring, my work has seldom had a—a token of appreciation that I—I value m-more—ahem—ho, ha—*ahem, hem—!*'"

Tears! Yes, there are tears for those who can shed them in *Nathan Burke,* where, indeed, the chapters describing Jim Sharpless's critical illness in the shabby little boarding house kept by the exasperating but pitiful Mrs. Slaney read more like Dickens than Thackeray. Tenderness? There is first and last a good deal of it, expended oftentimes upon individuals with whom Mrs. Watts teaches us a wise patience. There is a deserved tenderness in the close of the first part of *The Boardman Family,* relieved instantly by one of those swift transitions which occur in life. Sandra Boardman has decided to go to New York. She intends to become a professional dancer.

"She went to bed early that night; and after a while Mrs. Alexander Boardman, going quietly upstairs, stopped at her granddaughter's door and looked in. There was some disorder; Sandra's trunk had already gone, but her little valise stood open on a chair, waiting for the last odds and ends; there were her gloves and hat and her nattily rolled umbrella laid together. Mrs. Alexander went in a step; by the light from the hall she could see Sandra sound asleep, with her long, thick, black hair braided and tied up in a ribbon, lying across the pillow; she looked very small and young. On the night-stand beside the bed, there was the watch her father had given her on her nineteenth birthday, a girl's watch that never kept time, a foolish elegant trifle; and there was a half-

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eaten apple which she had probably been too sleepy to finish. Somehow these things, this inefficient watch, this apple with a bite or two out of it, suddenly seemed to the old lady poignantly pathetic; a hundred times she had seen Sandra thus in her crib, with a toy, a cooky alongside; Richard, too, when he was a baby. Old Sarah Chase Boardman, whose past, like everybody's past, must have held some unpleasing chapters, who went to church and subscribed to charities and practiced an unswerving courtesy all for no better reason than because it appeared to her the part of a lady, who believed nothing about God save that, if He existed, He must surely be a gentleman—old Sarah Boardman got down on her knees then and there and put up some lame petition for this young girl.

"Mrs. Richard, passing by, saw her in the attitude with surprise and alarm. 'Good gracious, Mother, what is the matter?' she wanted to know, in a guarded voice.

" 'Nothing,' said Mrs. Alexander, rising stiffly. 'I dropped my little gold pin. Never mind, Lucy, I found it, thank you!' "

A beautifully illustrative passage. It shows the Defoe method, the enumerative narration, at its best. So many writers would have failed to infect us with the feeling that Mrs. Watts conveys. It is not until you have stepped inside Sandra's room and seen, bit by bit, what old Sarah Boardman saw, that you can share her feeling and understand how a very fine (but also very worldly) old lady came to kneel and "put up some lame petition for this girl." The conclusion

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emphasizes what we said at the start of this discussion. Would you, well as you might have known Sarah Boardman, have known just how she would behave when her daughter-in-law caught her upon her knees in Sandra's bedroom? Mrs. Watts knew, knew perfectly the rather pathetic deception the old lady's pride—reserve, worldliness, whatever you choose to call it—would inspire; knew also the presence of mind which would enable her to effect it.

In order of popularity Mrs. Watts's books stand thus: *Nathan Burke,* then *The Legacy,* her next book after *Nathan Burke;* then *The Rise of Jennie Cushing.* The comparison is somewhat vitiated by the fact that *Van Cleve,* coming between *The Legacy* and *Jennie Cushing,* was published serially in the *Atlantic Monthly* and must have reached a great many of Mrs. Watts's readers that way before it appeared in covers. *The Rudder* was less successful than any of the others, though it is too early to judge of the popularity of *The Boardman Family,* published in the spring of 1918. For some reason which the present writer is unable to fathom, *The Rudder* was criticised with a most unusual severity of opinion by those who "review" books and commonly mistake their opinions for infallible fact. I have been unable to perceive its inferiority to the bulk of Mrs. Watts's work. It is a less dramatic story, so far as external incident goes, than most of the novels, but in its portraiture, its fidelity to personal characteristics, its humor, its sharpness of observation and skillful selection for recording, *The Rudder* leaves nothing to be desired. I should rate it with *The Legacy* while freely conceding that the de-

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veloped story of the girl and woman, Letty Breen, chief figure in *The Legacy,* more readily holds the average reader's attention and interest.

The close of *The Legacy,* where Letty Breen asks herself: "Am *I* a good woman—a bad woman?" and then answers "I do not know," clearly foreshadowed *The Rise of Jennie Cushing,* which, since its presentation in motion pictures with Elsie Ferguson in the title rôle, will be in its main outlines familiar to more people than any other story of Mrs. Watts's, not even excepting *Nathan Burke.* It is a pity that the film representation twists the conclusion of the tale so as to affix the conventional happy ending. Not the inevitable happy ending—none can object to a happy ending where it is inevitable, nor desire another; it is where an unhappy or neutral ending is inevitable that we resent anything else being foisted upon us. And the true ending, the book ending, of *The Rise of Jennie Cushing* is neutral. It could not be otherwise. There is in Jennie Cushing, built up by her solid will and fortified by her experience, a force sufficiently great to neutralize her love for Don and save her from herself.

The Rise of Jennie Cushing is the most dramatic, the most artistic, and will be the most enduring of Mrs. Watts's books. It is without any question a really great novel and both in its conception and its execution it would reflect luster upon any name in American literature and upon the literature of any land on earth. The popularity of *Nathan Burke,* with its richness of detail, its warmth of feeling, its lively narration and its distinctly good and distinctly bad characters, is

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natural and to be expected. Any one who likes Dickens will revel in *Nathan Burke*. The popularity of *The Legacy* is partly attributable to the fact that it followed *Nathan Burke*. But the popularity of *Jennie Cushing* represents the fresh and admiring discovery of Mrs. Watts by an audience in large part different from that she had acquired with her earlier books. It was a popularity wholly earned by *Jennie Cushing* and not a "carry-over" from a preceding book, as in the case of *The Legacy*. That it was earned by the merit of the book itself is clear enough from this fact: In the case of *Nathan Burke* and *The Legacy* the reprintings fell within three or four months; the books sold off quickly. But *Jennie Cushing* was published in October, reprinted in November—and the next reprinting was the following June! This was not a book of ephemeral success and made its way slowly by sheer power.

Power shows in every line of the story. Power of a silent but incomparably wonderful sort is embodied in Jennie Cushing, the girl whose infancy was spent in a brothel, who learned completely and finally when to keep her lips shut, who was sent to a reformatory, who went to work as a domestic on a farm, who gave herself to be the model and mistress of an artist, who gave nothing that was not hers to give, whose only mistake was in keeping silent once too often—or *was* that a mistake? At any rate, Jennie Cushing was stronger than any one about her, more human, broader, capable of greater comprehensions, readier to make necessary decisions and to act upon them, able to pay the hardest price the world could exact from her—

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cool, courageous Jennie! And yet she was feminine. Who can forget the little girl that was stricken with the loveliness of the bronze statuette of two girls blithely dancing? But her clear insight! She knew that it would be wrong for Don to marry her and, in the very torture of her love for him, had courage to tell him so and insist upon it. Her love she could not deny, or would not; one hesitates to say that Jennie *could not* deny herself anything.

The Boardman Family suffers one serious defect. After writing with all her usual skill and putting completely before us the girl Sandra Boardman; her contemptible brother; Max Levison, the theatrical manager; and various other absolutely life-like and interesting persons; after getting our interest to a high pitch in the dilemma that confronts Sandra respecting Levison as a lover Mrs. Watts quite incomprehensibly has these three take passage on the Lusitania (they could as easily have sailed on any other boat) and in the destruction of the steamship Levison and Everett are drowned! The reader has himself the sense of being submarined; his interest, torpedoed without warning, sinks without a trace. If such a thing took place in a novel by a less able writer we should know what to think of it; we should know that the author had created a situation which was beyond him and from which he could not extricate his people without a few fatalities! But no situation is beyond Mrs. Watts; she has proved that time and again. It is a mystery to be cleared up later.

Van Cleve is an excellent and characteristic piece of work which, next to *Nathan Burke*, may perhaps

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best be depended upon to engage the interest of any one whose natural or acquired tastes fit him to enjoy Mrs. Watts's fine novels of the manners of our time. Of her *Three Short Plays,* since they are not really within the scope of this book, we will say merely that *An Ancient Dance* is the most ingenious and dramatically effective. *Civilization* is splendid satire but inconclusive in its termination. *The Wearin' O' The Green* is a farce that lacks the necessary madness and fantasticality. But all three plays are most agreeable reading.

BOOKS BY MARY S. WATTS

The Tenants, 1908.
Nathan Burke, 1910.
The Legacy, 1911.
Van Cleve: His Friends and His Family, 1913.
The Rise of Jennie Cushing, 1914.
The Rudder, 1916.
Three Short Plays, 1917.
The Boardman Family, 1918.

Mrs. Watts's books are published by the Macmillan Company, New York.

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CHAPTER XV

MARY E. WILKINS FREEMAN

IF this chapter on Mary Wilkins Freeman, one of the best known of American writers, seems disappointingly short, the explanation is to be found in three considerations:

Mrs. Freeman is primarily a short story writer and not a novelist. Her successes have been with short stories, and they have been many.

Both as a short story writer and as a novelist her work is unimportant, largely ephemeral and extremely overrated. Ephemerality in itself does not matter; most things are ephemeral measured by any absolute standards. Books come and go, opinions change as they ought to; the fleeting quality of the mass of fiction is to be taken as a matter of course; but when there is a persistent effort to maintain that such writing as Mrs. Freeman's has any permanent value as a contribution to literature, it is necessary to deny strongly and without qualification even at some risk of doing her really excellent work injustice. The reader must not construe what we say about her work as an expression of opinion, but as an assertion of fact. Dogma against dogma! Mr. Howells and his school have so long instructed us to accept without

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question their estimates of her work that it becomes imperative to cut the ground from under them. They insist upon the literary value of such writing as Mrs. Freeman's. There is no such thing as literary value in writing. There are no literary values, there are only values in life. And what is Mrs. Freeman's value in life? Slight, reminiscential, pleasing, sometimes entertaining, occasionally revelatory of human nature, but never for a moment revealing anything unexpected, never anything of which we have not been perfectly aware—her stories are cordially welcome and likeable (in general) without having the slightest relation to the business of living. We read them and sustain a faint consciousness that *once* in some place among a few people they may have had some bearing on life. We read them and observe that in the main they are told skillfully. We are very glad to have them—and that is all.

The third reason for the brevity with which we deal with her is purely historical. If this book were being written in 1898 instead of 1918, she would occupy, and rightly, a considerable space in it. But as recently as 1914 a book of her stories was put out with the short story, *The Copy-Cat,* occupying first place in it and giving its title to the book! The story deals with a little girl, Amelia, who was forever imitating another little girl, Lily. Amelia was plain and Lily was pretty:

"Amelia, being very young and very tired, went to sleep. She did not know that that night was to mark a sharp turn in her whole life. Thereafter she went to school 'dressed like the best,' and her mother petted

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her as nobody had ever known her mother could pet.

"It was not so very long afterward that Amelia, out of her own improvement in appearance, developed a little stamp of individuality.

"One day Lily wore a white frock with blue ribbons, and Amelia wore one with coral pink. It was a particular day in school; there was company, and tea was served.

" 'I told you I was going to wear blue ribbons,' Lily whispered to Amelia. Amelia smiled lovingly back at her.

" 'Yes, I know, but I thought I would wear pink.' "

This in the year of our Lord 1914! This in the year when blood began to flow as it has never flowed before; when free peoples everywhere awoke to the presence of Black Evil on earth; when big, generous America with all her faults was not exactly likely to be thrilled or touched or enlightened by the recital of how a plain little girl finally got up enough gumption to wear pink ribbons instead of blue. And yet we suppose the people who set such store by "literary" values thought this a "delightful little story"—"so true a picture of children"—"and wasn't that a charming conceit of sleeping in each other's beds!" But it is wretched stuff, really. At the end Mrs. Freeman simply tells you that after "that night" Amelia's mother's whole nature changed and the uninterestingly imitative little girl developed "a little stamp of individuality" and will you please swallow all this quickly on Mrs. Freeman's mere say-so because she is tired of writing and the thing is already the right magazine length anyway. Bah!

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Mary E. Wilkins Freeman is an extremely modest person. She is of New England stock in both lines. Her ancestors were Puritan colonists. She was born in Randolph, Massachusetts, in 1862, and received her education there and at Mount Holyoke Seminary. Ten years of her life were spent in Brattleboro, Vermont, but after the death of her parents she returned to Randolph where she made her home until her marriage on New Year's Day, 1902, to Dr. Charles M. Freeman of Metuchen, New Jersey. Since then Mrs. Freeman has lived in Metuchen.

Exactly when the intention to write first came to her, Mrs. Freeman does not remember. She always felt that she must work at something, but did not know what it was to be. Though she was fond of painting and sculpture, her chief interest as a girl was reading. Socially, her tastes were exceedingly catholic, and she was on the best of terms with all her neighbors, many of whom she found herself studying as characteristic New England types, thus unconsciously preparing herself for the moment when she was to become a writer. She likes "people who drop their g's and use the double negative, as well as people who don't."

Success as a writer came to her instantly. She suffered none of the rebuffs and delays and discouragements usual to the young author. Her earliest work was done for children and took the form of short stories and poems in juvenile magazines. Her first grown-up story was *The Old Lovers,* sent to *Harper's Bazar.* Miss Mary L. Booth, then editor of that periodical, upon receiving this contribution, written in a

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cramped and unformed handwriting, evidently that of a child, determined upon a hasty reading, but was so struck in the opening paragraphs with the humor and the pathos of the story that she promptly sent Mrs. Freeman a check. In the same mail with the *Bazar* acceptance came a notification that her story, *The Shadow Family,* had captured the prize in a competition conducted by the Boston *Sunday Budget.* Both the checks seemed very large to the new writer. "My delight and astonishment knew no bounds."

Mrs. Freeman is a rather small woman, singularly unaffected, cordial, frank. A friend once described her thus: "A little, frail-looking creature, with a splendid quantity of pale-brown hair, and dark-blue eyes with a direct look and a clear, frank expression—eyes that readily grow bright with fun." Mrs. Freeman has plenty of humor, is quiet and whimsical, is fond of country ways, but confesses to fear of cows, caterpillars and all creeping things.

Her popularity has been sufficient to bring about the translation of a number of her books into various European languages.

BOOKS BY MARY E. WILKINS FREEMAN

The Debtor.
The Fair Lavinia.
A Humble Romance, 1887.
A New England Nun, 1891.
Young Lucretia, 1892.
Jane Field, 1892.
Giles Corey, 1893.

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Pembroke, 1894.
Madelon, 1896.
Jerome—A Poor Man, 1897.
Silence, 1898.
Evelina's Garden, 1899.
The Love of Parson Lord, 1900.
The Hearts of Highway, 1900.
The Portion of Labor, 1901.
Understudies, 1901.
Six Trees, 1903.
The Wind in the Rose Bush, 1903.
The Givers, 1904.
Doc Gordon, 1906.
By the Light of the Soul, 1907.
Shoulders of Atlas, 1908.
The Winning Lady, 1909.
The Green Door, 1910.
The Butterfly House, 1912.
Yates Pride, 1912.
The Copy-Cat and Other Stories, 1914.
The Jamesons.
People of Our Neighborhood.

Published by Harper & Brothers, New York; but The Butterfly House is published by Dodd, Mead & Company, New York.

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CHAPTER XVI

ANNA KATHARINE GREEN

THE real Anna Katharine Green is a terrible mystery. We do not mean Mrs. Charles Rohlfs of 156 Park Street, Buffalo, whose husband is an expert maker of fine furniture and who wrote *Initials Only* and *The Leavenworth Case.* We mean the Anna Katharine Green Mind, a Mind no longer young counted by years, a Mind as subtle and powerful and clever as ever, counted by achievement. Read *The Mystery of the Hasty Arrow,* published at the close of 1917, if you doubt that Mind's unabated mastery. Anna Katharine Green—but hush! What awe-inspiring quality invests the mere whisper of that name? Why do cold shivers run up and down our backs? Why in our commonplace surroundings—porch, porch chairs, typewriter, manuscript—why, why do we chill all over? Why do the thrills in dots and dashes like a hurrying Morse code torture our nerves?

We will tell you.

It is because last night we opened a book and read:

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I

WHERE IS BELA?

"A high and narrow gate of carefully joined boards, standing ajar in a fence of the same construction! What is there in this to rouse a whole neighborhood and collect before it a group of eager, anxious, hesitating people?

"I will tell you.

"This fence is no ordinary fence, and this gate no ordinary gate; nor is the fact of the latter standing a trifle open, one to be lightly regarded or taken an inconsiderate advantage of. For this is Judge Ostrander's place. . . ."

We read. And we read. The others retired for the night. The pale moon swam slowly through the heavens, regarding us with a calm, cold indifference. The town clock boomed midnight, then one, then two. Fatality hung in the air. Horror coursed in the veins and the blood ceased to pulse through the arteries. Occasionally a ripened apple dropped from the nearby tree to the ground. At the thud we jumped. But we could not stop until, on page 381, the last of *Dark Hollow,* we had read the solemn words: "Peace for him; and for Reuther and Oliver, hope!" Then we crept off to bed. Utter exhaustion of all sensation brought swift sleep. . . .

It must have been about a third of the way through that the conviction stole over us of Judge Ostrander's guilt. Who murdered Algernon Etheridge in Dark

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Hollow? Did John Scoville, executed for the crime? Did—shuddering thought—young Oliver Ostrander slay that friend of his father's whom he hated so? Neither . . . neither! Then who? Why, the unlikeliest person in the book, of course, and trust Anna Katharine Green to make it plausible!

Mrs. Green—it is difficult to know whether to call Mrs. Rohlfs "Miss Green" or "Mrs. Green"—Mrs. Green cannot write "for a cent," as slang has it; but she can write and has written for a good many dollars! And by that we don't mean her motive is purely businesslike; we prefer to believe that she writes for the exercise of her marvelous and peculiar talent, and to afford excitement and entertainment to many thousands who read her books. What is this talent? (It is impossible in writing about her to avoid falling into the theatricism of her narrative style!)

Did you ever try to write a mystery story? If you have tried you will understand much better than we can tell you. And if you haven't it will be necessary to take a single specimen of Mrs. Green's work to illustrate her powers.

Dark Hollow—and she never wrote a more excellent yarn—centers about the murder of Algernon Etheridge twelve years before the narrative begins. John Scoville, keeper of a tavern, was tried and executed for the crime, swearing his innocence. Etheridge was the closest personal friend Judge Archibald Ostrander had. Circumstances compelled Judge Ostrander to preside at Scoville's trial and the Judge was not merely impartial, but manifestly favored, so far as was compatible with fairness, the defense. The evidence

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against Scoville was purely circumstantial but strong. He had been in Dark Hollow that night at the time of the crime. Etheridge was killed with Scoville's stick. Scoville's character was bad.

For twelve years since the crime Judge Ostrander has lived shut off from the world, except for his appearances on the bench. His grounds are walled off by a high board fence within a high board fence and he lives alone with a huge negro servant. His son and he have parted irrevocably.

When the story opens this negro, Bela, has gone forth on morning errands, unprecedentedly leaving the gate in the fence ajar! A woman in purple, heavily veiled, has entered the grounds. The gaping neighborhood ventures in after her but does not find her. The crowd comes upon the Judge sitting erect and apparently lifeless in his house! It is an attack of catalepsy. A little later the negro, mortally wounded by an automobile, returns and dies trying to guard the iron door in the house which preserves his master's secret.

The woman in purple turns out to be Mrs. Scoville. She sees the Judge and tells him that his son, Oliver, has fallen in love with her daughter, Reuther. She also tells him of her conviction that her husband did not slay Etheridge. It is a conviction arrived at since his execution. Late as it is, she is determined to do what she can to uncover new evidence.

Chapter by chapter, piling sensation on sensation, Mrs. Green writes of Mrs. Scoville's quest. There is the shadow of the man in the peaked cap seen advancing into Dark Hollow at the hour of the crime. There is the picture of Oliver Ostrander secreted in his fath-

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er's house with a band of black painted across the eyes. There is the point of a knife blade in the stick with which Etheridge was killed, and the blade from which it was broken lies folded in Oliver's desk. A peaked cap hangs in Oliver's closet! Just when every circumstance drives home the conviction of Oliver's guilt Judge Ostrander shows Mrs. Scoville a written statement that establishes the fact of an earlier murder by her husband. She is taken all aback and for the moment she believes again that the right man was put to death for the murder of Etheridge. But the Judge allows her to look at the document a moment too long. It has been tampered with at the close; forgery has been done!

Oliver must be found, for an accusation against him has got abroad and the police are looking for him. There is a race between the agents of the district attorney and the messengers of the Judge. He is found in a remote spot in the Adirondacks and flees, but whether to return home at his father's summons or to escape to Canada, who knows? By a desperate drop over the side of a cliff he has landed in a tree top. The train is not due for fifteen minutes. He'll catch it.

"'The train south?'

"'Yes, and the train north. They pass here.'"

Is it a return or a flight to escape? Thus, in chapter after chapter, Mrs. Green creates new suspense, introduces new thrills. As each lesser uncertainty is resolved a fresh one takes its place and always the great major questions hang unanswered over her story —till the very close. Then the one closed avenue to

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a solution is unbarred, the stunning surprise is sprung and the curtain falls swiftly on a stupefying dénouement. Between the big revelation and the very end of the tale there is just time enough and just explanation enough to convince the reader of what he would least have believed before.

This faint outline of a capital story illustrates Mrs. Green's talent. Now for the explanation. The whole art of it consists in a truly infinite capacity for taking pains. Before writing this story it was necessary to write, or get clearly in mind, the biographies of half a dozen people. Their lives had to be fully known to the author, even to innumerable incidents which would not be used in her story. Particularly was it necessary to know every aspect in the past of the relations of these people to each other.

It was next necessary to reconstruct the crime. A period of twenty minutes or half an hour at a given place was under consideration. Where was this place and where did it stand with respect to every other place in the story—Judge Ostrander's house, the Claymore Inn, the ruin of Spencer's Folly? A map had to be made. It is an illustration in the book. But much more than a map was necessary. The exact whereabouts of every one of half a dozen persons for the whole twenty minutes or half hour had to be settled. Etheridge, Scoville, Mrs. Scoville, Oliver and Judge Ostrander were all in or near Dark Hollow. Just where was each at every moment? Just what was each doing? Just what could, and did, each say and do and hear and see? The author must know *all* these things in order to spare the reader what is

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irrelevant. She must have every inch of the ground at her fingertips and every instant clear. You don't believe this? Try writing a story like *Dark Hollow*, improvising as you go along, or working from a mere outline, and see what happens to you!

The only improvisation in such work as Mrs. Green's is in respect of what might be called chapter climaxes—the brief thrills, one or more to a chapter, which arise, administer their shock to the reader's nerves, and are cleared up some pages later. Many of these are planned in advance, a few suggest themselves as the writer goes along, others are real inspirations which have suggested themselves during the writing and are substituted for planned but less effective climaxes. Such is the incident cited above where two trains, one bound south and the other bound for Canada, meet and pass at the little mountain station.

It is frequently said that the whole art of a mystery story or detective story of the kind Mrs. Green writes is to direct suspicion at every person except the right one, until the end! This is clever and partly true, but it takes no account of the vast amount of construction which must go forward before a sentence of the story can be put on paper; it ignores the fact that the criminal, to be convincing, must have figured in the story from the start, for otherwise he will appear as a desperate invention to help the author out of an otherwise insoluble situation. Looking at *Dark Hollow* in retrospect it is quite easy to see why certain things had to be—so. Judge Ostrander had to be the murderer because he was the person least likely to kill his dearest friend. Oliver had to be under sus-

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picion to make Judge Ostrander's confession plausible. The Judge had to be the murderer, furthermore, that Reuther Scoville might not be an unfit person to become the wife of Oliver. Oliver had to be cleared that he might be fit to mate with Reuther! Yes, yes; but all this wisdom after the event gets nowhere. It does not penetrate to the heart of the action and throws no light on the author's cunning. Do you suppose for a moment that she made her story out of such nice little expediencies as these? You can't build a story that way. It won't hold together for a moment.

No! The real starting point in *Dark Hollow* was the conception on the part of Mrs. Green of a man who should, in a moment's fit of passion, slay his closest friend and who should thereafter, for twelve years, inflict on himself a peculiar punishment, imprisoning himself in a convict's cell *in his own home!* All the rest—the painting of a black band across the eyes of his son's portrait that they might not look on his father, murderer and coward; the sending of that son away from home for all time; the building of a double fence to guard against intrusion by so much as an eye at a knothole—all these followed. Then on this solid foundation of a single life, a single idea, a single stricken conscience arose, course by course, the complicated and wonderful (but solid and sound) structure of the book.

That is the talent of Anna Katharine Green, explained, analyzed and illustrated. Things there are about it that cannot be explained or analyzed. These we pass. We have said that she cannot write. It is true. *The Leavenworth Case,* and *The Mystery of*

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the Hasty Arrow and *Dark Hollow*—every one of her many books is wretchedly written, full of trite and cheap expressions, full of cliches, dotted with ludicrous trifles of thought and expression, spotted with absurdities, as where the negro Bela is struck and fatally injured by an automobile at the outset of *Dark Hollow*. The car inflicted a terrible gash in his head and we are informed that "it took a sixty horsepower racing machine going at a high rate of speed to kill him"! And then it didn't do it instantaneously! If Mrs. Green could have had a collaborator with only average literary skill she would carry everything irresistibly before her. Her mind, joined to a pen capable of writing freshly, simply, with dramatic effect but without theatricism, without sentimental mawkishness, would have achieved books to be put on the shelf alongside the stories of Poe, classical, perfect, immortal.

But if she is not immortal she will live a long, long time! Without ever having created a character to compare with Sherlock Holmes she has constructed tales more baffling than any of the crimes Sir Conan Doyle's detective solved. She has not had to resort to exotic coloring as Doyle has sometimes had to do to conceal thinness of story. She has not had to depend upon abstruse mathematical ciphers and codes as Poe did in *The Goldbug*. She has not had to carry us through generations and coincidences as Gaboriau did in *File No. 113*. She never employs the fanciful inversions and mystical paradoxes by which Gilbert K. Chesterton establishes, not so much the existence of crime and criminals, as *The Innocence of Father Brown*. She can handle more complex strands than Melville Davis-

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son Post. But Mr. Post can write rings around her! When we get the Anna Katharine Green Mind and the Melville Davisson Post Art joined in a single person America will produce the detective and mystery stories not of a decade nor of a generation but of all time. Meanwhile let us give Mrs. Green her due. In her way, and we have tried to show her way and to differentiate it from the ways of others, she is the most accomplished story-teller in American literary history. She is unique, and with anything unique it is well to be satisfied!

BOOKS BY ANNA KATHARINE GREEN

The Leavenworth Case. A. L. Burt Company, New York.
A Strange Disappearance.
The Sword of Damocles.
Hand and Ring.
The Mill Mystery.
Marked "Personal."
Miss Hurd—An Enigma.
Behind Closed Doors.
Cynthia Wakeham's Money.
Dr. Izard.
The Old Stone House and Other Stories.
7 to 12.
X. Y. Z.
The Doctor, His Wife and the Clock.
That Affair Next Door.
Lost Man's Lane.
Agatha Webb.

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Risifi's Daughter: A Drama.
A Difficult Problem and Other Stories.
The Circular Study.
One of My Sons.
The Filigree Ball.
The Defense of the Bride and Other Poems, 1904. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York.
The Millionaire Baby, 1905. Burt.
The House in the Mist, 1905.
The Amethyst Box, 1905.
The Chief Legatee, 1906. Dodd, Mead & Company, New York.
The Mayor's Wife, 1907.
Three Thousand Dollars, 1909.
The House of the Whispering Pines, 1910. Burt.
Initials Only, 1911. Dodd, Mead. Burt reprinted in the Army and Navy Library of Detective Fiction, 1918.
Masterpieces of Mystery, 1912.
Dark Hollow, 1914. Dodd, Mead. Burt.
The Golden Slipper and Other Problems for Violet Strange, 1915.
The Woman in the Alcove, 1916. Burt.
The Mystery of the Hasty Arrow, 1917. Dodd, Mead.

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CHAPTER XVII

HELEN R. MARTIN

A CHAPTER on Helen R. Martin can hardly be anything but a prolonged interview, or a pieced interview, somewhat like a patchwork quilt, constructed from talks of various persons with her at various times. And always on the same subject—her subject—the Pennsylvania Dutch.

What there is to say about the writer and her work shall first be said. She is the daughter of the Rev. Cornelius Reimensnyder, who came from Germany to accept the pastorate of Lancaster county, so the daughter was brought up among the Mennonites. She has written a novel every year or so for the last fourteen years, writing in the time left over after taking care of her home and her children, a boy and a girl; canvassing for suffrage and campaigning for Socialism. Her home is in Harrisburg, the capital of Pennsylvania. Her first novel was not of the people among whom she had spent her life but "a romance of life as she would like it to be." Fortunately it did not sell, so she was led to look about her for her future material. She did not begin to write until she met Frederick R. Martin, to whom she was afterward married. He is an instructor in music. And Mrs.

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Martin was herself a teacher. At one time she taught children in a fashionable private school in New York City. She knew the youngsters rather better than their parents.

Mrs. Martin, like Marjorie Benton Cooke and Harriet T. Comstock, is interested in social questions. She has decided views on bringing up children, wealth and poverty; she does not subscribe to Mrs. Charlotte Perkins Gilman's views of motherhood; she is not a feminist in any general meaning of the word, because she believes that feminism in many of its aspects is a passing phase. As a rule her preoccupation with these problems is kept out of her work—the older generation of the people she wrote about were blandly unaware that such questions reared their heads—but her last two novels, *Gertie Swartz: Fanatic or Christian?* and *Maggie of Virginsburg,* introduce them extensively and disastrously. Mrs. Martin's failure with *Gertie Swartz* arose entirely from her inability to assimilate such matter *before* writing her story. As a result industrial conditions and employees' welfare are indigestible lumps in the novel. Some subjects cannot be introduced bodily into a piece of fiction. They must arise as they arise in life out of situations and character. They cannot be discussed in a story as they are discussed from a platform. They can only act upon the people of the tale or be acted upon by them; they can be discussed, if the representation of life is to be fairly accurate, only to the extent that the situations of the story call for. It is true that life contains many futile and windy discussions, some academic, some not; but the only things that count are those which involve

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action or precipitate action or express or mold character. The novelist must exclude all else, otherwise the novel will lack illusion and resemble nothing so much as the minutes of the last meeting of the Society for the Suppression of Sociological Sores.

Gertie Swartz aside, the real controversy over Mrs. Martin's work arises from her studies of Pennsylvania Dutch life, and is of a sort to give satisfaction to her as a writer. For the very nature of the controversy carries with it the plain implication that she has got under the skin of her people. It is alleged and deposed that she does not do the Pennsylvania Dutch justice. The allegation was most completely made in the New York *Evening Post* for April 29, 1916, by Isaac R. Pennypacker.

Briefly, Mr. Pennypacker declared that those who knew the Pennsylvania Dutch "in a broader way" than Mrs. Martin's stories reflect them "have never taken her pictures of the life very seriously." George Schock's *Hearts Contending*, a novel repeatedly praised by William Dean Howells, "should be read as a corrective of Mrs. Martin's tales." Elsie Singmaster also has had a better understanding of the Pennsylvania Germans. The Moravians and the famous Bethlehem Bach Choir are proof of Pennsylvania German culture. Read Whittier's poem, *The Pennsylvania Pilgrim* (he thought it better than *Snowbound* but said the public would never find it out!). Pennsylvania German troops did bravely in the Revolution and the Civil War. Mrs. Martin admits that the Pennsylvania Dutch rise but it is ungracious of her to call attention to the lingering

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accent, because Americans speak French and German badly. Besides, she does not cite all the instances of their rise to high station. She refers to their unpolished manners but great men, like Dr. Johnson and Edwin M. Stanton, seldom have nice manners. "Mrs. Martin's curious comment on the fact that the Pennsylvania Dutchman's barn is larger than his house would be paralleled if she were to find it curious that Mr. Wanamaker's department store is larger than his residence." Is it? But how would Mr. Pennypacker account for the fact that Judge Gary's house on Fifth avenue is larger than his office at 71 Broadway? "A punctilious regard for good manners by which she sets such store would forever have prevented Mrs. Martin from publishing her books, because the portraits of the people in them are caricatures." Look out, Mrs. Martin! Some one sees resemblances in your caricatures!

There is the case against Mrs. Martin and it is the highest compliment her work could have. The next highest compliment is the fact that Minnie Maddern Fiske made *Barnabetta* into a play, *Erstwhile Susan,* and appeared herself in the title-rôle. And the next highest compliment is what Richard Watson Gilder of the *Century* once said to Mrs. Martin: "Your people do not converse on paper—they talk. When a community is written up that community always resents it, even if it is described flatteringly. You can't praise any community enough to satisfy its own conceit about itself."

So much for compliments. If you call for proofs

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ask Mrs. Martin to show you or read to you (she won't allow them, as a rule, to be published) some of the hundreds of letters she has received from Pennsylvania Germans wanting to know if So-and-so was the original of this character, asking why such and such a person was "put in your book," complaining that she does not do justice to Pennsylvania Dutch good traits, complaining that she does not do justice to Pennsylvania Dutch bad traits, as stinginess and selfishness toward the womenfolk; praising her delineation of Pennsylvania Dutch life, condemning her for her delineation of Pennsylvania Dutch life. The truth is this, as Mrs. Martin says:

"The Pennsylvania Dutch don't like my stories. That is, the educated descendants of the Pennsylvania Dutch don't like them. The people of whom I write generally are people who read nothing, not even newspapers, except, as one woman told me, 'sometimes meby the comic section.' But the Pennsylvania Dutch citizens of such places as Reading, Lancaster, Lebanon, Bethlehem and other cities resent my commentaries upon the race from which they have risen. Overlooking the finer and lovable characters described in my books, they prefer to dwell upon the harsh people. I wish more of them would take comfort from Tillie, Mrs. Dreary, and the rest of my heroines.

"The only Pennsylvania Dutch who enjoy my stories seem to be those who have moved West and to whom my books seem to come like a visit home."

We think the reader of Mrs. Martin's novels will thank us if we forego a synoptic discussion of her

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tales and give instead what she has to say, outside her books, about the people in them.

"It is a part of the common misconception that the Pennsylvania Dutch of whom I write are all Mennonites. Now, Mennonites are a religious sect, not a race or a nationality! I have written very little about Mennonites. They are as inoffensive and mild as the Quakers, and it is absurd to confound characters like Mrs. Dreary of the play *Erstwhile Susan* and her foster son Jake (who are, of course, Pennsylvania Dutch) with the sect of Mennonites. Once a Pennsylvania Dutchman becomes a Mennonite, he gives over his harshness and other grievous faults and leads a mild, gentle and inoffensive life. Of course they are all very frugal and 'close'—they never outgrow that.

"The Amishmen are set apart from the world by their hooks and eyes. They never wear buttons and buttonholes because buttons and buttonholes are worldly. All of them wear the same sort of garb. The women fold kerchiefs over their shoulders and across the breast that their too seductive charms may not be revealed.

"I remember the suspicion with which Pennsylvania Dutch farmers and their wives would invariably regard me when, applying for a few days' board, I would confess to being a married woman, not even a widow. Why, then, was I going about without my husband? This made it harder for me to obtain board than if I had been an old maid. 'Where's her husband, anyhow?' the farmer and his wife would speculate. 'Her out here alone fur three days yet and him not showin' his face! It's somepin awful funny!' Then the wife

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would tell me how in twenty-five years of married life she had never yet spent a night away from her spouse.

"One morning as I was sitting on the kitchen porch writing to my husband the farmer's wife bent over my shoulder to read what I was writing. 'Now that there writin',' she remarked, 'I can't read it so very good.' I quickly laid the blotter over the page. 'I am writing to my husband,' I said hastily, 'to let him know where I am.' She stared at me. 'He don't know where you're at?' she gasped. 'Well, I guess anyhow, then!' Which, being interpreted, meant: 'I should think it was about time!' "

The following further account of these people is taken from a talk Joseph Gollomb had with Mrs. Martin while she was in New York to see the opening of Mrs. Fiske in *Erstwhile Susan.* The interview, printed in the New York *Evening Post* of January 22, 1916, provoked Mr. Pennypacker's blanket indictment which we have already recapitulated:

"You can tell the Pennsylvania Dutchman by his speech, even after he sheds his queer clothes and barbering and takes on the guise of the average American," explained Mrs. Martin. "A bellboy in Allentown once disarmed my wrath with, 'Was you bellin' for me? I didn't hear it make.' I knew him then as coming from my people. His father probably would say, cocking his weather eye, 'It looks for rain. I'm sure it's going to make something down.' Or his mother, pricing at market, would ask, 'For what do you sell your chickens at? I want to wonder. I feel for getting that fat one.' Your washerwoman, with all the deference in the world, will refer to your hus-

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band and hers: 'Does your Charlie like his shirt ironed? My mister don't.'

"Enter Cashtown, Virginsville, or Bird-In-The-Hand (these are actual towns). You'll see houses painted flagrant red or yellow or pink; flower gardens gorgeous with color. And there all the display, or even trace of love of physical beauty, stops. The homes are immaculate but ugly. The parlor is furnished at marriage, then shut up for years.

"Most of the living is in the kitchen. The barn is bigger than the house and is more modern than the kitchen. That is because the Pennsylvania Dutchman is parsimonious with everything but the labor of his women. He'll buy modern plows, an automobile to take his products to market, modern harness to save his horse. Up-to-dateness in the barn means more money in his pocket. But he won't spend a cent to save his wife or his daughter a bit of work. That is what they are for—to work for the men folks in the kitchen or near it.

"When a young man goes courting, his eyes are not blinded with Cupid's bandage. They are wide open to note how the prospective bride qualifies as a frugal, hardworking housewife. I watched a young man studying three girls, his object matrimony. They were sewing and he made a test of their frugality by the way they tore off their threads. The girl who tore off her thread closest to the stitch appealed to him most. Later he watched them at pie making. With another test in mind he asked each of them for the waste dough scraps. One of the girls, wanting to make a hit, gave him generously. The girl who had won in

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the first test scrimped a few crumbs for him—and won his hand and heart. Soon after, his foot was seen on the rocker of her chair as they talked—which is Pennsylvania Dutch for 'I mean to marry this girl!' . . .

"What has given them the passion for pinching their souls I don't know. It may be a narrow and too literal interpretation of the Bible—for they are intensely religious in the orthodox sense. The great majority of them sooner or later join one of the several religious sects—Mennonites, Dunkards, Amish, or some other. 'I feel to be plain,' they say, and join one of these sects.

"Their word is as good as gold—but they'll quibble with their word. A grower will get his wife to water the tobacco leaf, to make it weigh more. 'Did you water this tobacco?' the intending buyer asks the farmer. 'No,' the farmer answers with literal truth. But once he gives his literal word it is good to the last penny."

These people are without the sense of citizenship. "They don't think about it at all," said Mrs. Martin to an interviewer whose report of her was printed in the *Evening Sun,* New York, April 7, 1915. "They have no problems and therefore they are contented with their lot. They are wary of education; they think it makes rogues. 'Look at those grafters in Harrisburg!' they will say."

Mrs. Martin once told a capital story of the Amish. This sect has a rule that any one who breaks a law of the meeting shall be penalized by living apart from his wife or, in the case of a woman, her husband;

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denied even the solace of recrimination. The wife of a particularly stingy member of the sect devised a cunning punishment for him by herself breaking one of the laws of the meeting. "I don't know what rule she broke," Mrs. Martin said. "It may have been sewing a button on her dress instead of a hook and eye, or she may have advocated painting the house. In any event her husband became an outcast, unable even to speak to his wife.

"I used the instance, somewhat colored, in a story. The result was that I got a letter from an Amish preacher informing me that if I would give him the name of the man who was so stingy to his wife the church would punish him properly. Of course I replied that the instance was purely fictitious. To which the reply of the minister was that he could not understand why I wrote such lies about the sect!"

Introducing Mrs. Martin, a bright, cheerful, little bit of a woman, at a booksellers' convention in New York, William Hard declared that she and Margaret Deland were like two large railroad systems each operating exclusively in its own territory by a tacit understanding. Mrs. Martin, to accept the simile, freights great quantities of valuable stuff and yields far better dividends than some of the big transcontinental lines!

BOOKS BY HELEN R. MARTIN

Elusive Hildegarde.
Her Husband's Purse.
His Courtship.

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Warren Hyde.
Tillie, a Mennonite Maid, 1904.
Sabina, a Story of the Amish, 1905.
The Betrothal of Elypholate and Other Tales of the Pennsylvania Dutch, 1907.
The Revolt of Anne Royle, 1908.
The Crossways, 1910.
When Half-Gods Go, 1911.
The Fighting Doctor, 1912.
The Parasite, 1913.
Barnabetta, 1914.
For a Mess of Pottage, 1915.
Martha of the Mennonite Country, 1915.
Those Fitzenbergers, 1917.
Gertie Swartz: Fanatic or Christian? 1918.
Maggie of Virginsburg, 1918.

Mrs. Martin's books are published by Doubleday, Page & Company, New York, and the Century Company, New York.

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CHAPTER XVIII

SOPHIE KERR

"July 19, 1918.

"My dear Mr. Overton:

"IT has been almost impossible for me to write this. I have made a dozen beginnings and invariably found myself drifting off into reminiscences of my childhood and funny lies about what I think and feel. Good heavens! what do I think and feel? I don't know. I really don't. I have never had the time nor found myself of sufficient interest to sit down and think about myself subjectively. I am afraid that this is a very queer narrative and very dull, but at least I have tried to give only facts. . . .

"I was born near Denton, Maryland, a small town located in the 'sandy belt' of the Eastern Shore. It is a narrow-minded, kind-hearted, conventional, self-respecting community, not very enterprising—an average little semi-Southern town. My father had a nursery and fruit farm, and cared more, I think, for beautiful trees than he did for people. We had lovely arborvitæ and red japonica hedges, magnolia trees, an extraordinary collection of evergreens, and many unusual foreign flowering shrubs.

"I went to school at Denton, the public school, and the embryo High School of twenty to twenty-five years ago. And then I went to college.

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"As a child I read everything that I could lay hands on and we always had books and magazines at home. But my reading was not guided and it was my great misfortune not to find among my teachers, either in school or college, even one with any special mental quality or deep and sound culture, or even any vital enthusiasm—with the exception of the psychology teacher at college.

"I began to write at college, the sort of imitative stuff that most college girls write—very highbrow essays on Maeterlinck, and that kind of thing. Not much fiction or poetry, as I remember. But I had my ideas of a writing career, for all that. When I was graduated from college I was just eighteen and I came home and told my father that I was going to be an author and he might as well buy me a typewriter —I was always of a severely practical turn of mind. I got the typewriter and began to write stories, first in longhand, then copying them single-spaced on the machine; they made terrifying manuscripts. One got into the *Ladies' World,* and one into the *Country Gentleman,* and one into *Truth,* which was then a flourishing publication. And about that time, after I had been home for a couple of years, at the suggestion of an old friend of my father's I went to the University of Vermont for a year of graduate work. And I began to take a special course in history there with Professor Samuel Emerson.

"I tell this with particularity, because it was the very best thing that ever happened to me. As I worked with Professor Emerson, I gradually and painfully became aware that I did not know how to use my

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mind, and that my education was of the most shocking superficiality. I learned that I didn't know how to think. I will admit that I was surprised and oh, how humiliated! If I'd only thrown myself on Professor Emerson's mercy and told him that I knew my shortcomings and asked him to help me! But I was too youthfully proud for that, and I went on, dimly trying to get at the thing myself and marking with a hopeless appreciation, which would have doubtless amazed the Professor had he guessed it, the truly wonderful way in which he used his own exceptional intellectuality.

"It is a fine thing to know what you do not know. It set me to work to try to get what I did not have—a disciplined, well-ordered, logical mind, a store of knowledge, a really broad culture. Alas, I never got any of them, and I never shall. It takes different training and environment from infancy to produce them, as well as greater capabilities than mine. But I did at least get this—the habit of thinking things out for myself, and a poor opinion, thought out by the individual, is better than a lazy acceptance of some one else's say-so.

"Naturally, my year with Professor Emerson gave me a very low opinion of my chances to become a writer. I let writing alone for a while, and then began doing little light things for the Pittsburgh *Gazette,* one of whose staff I had met while on a visit to Pittsburgh. They were mostly little essays—though that word is really too dignified for them—on the foibles and fashions of the time. Sometimes a drop or two of sentiment and little amusing incidents that

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I gathered when visiting in Washington and Baltimore —we Southerners are great visitors, you know—occasionally a scrap of very light verse.

"But this was not enough. I got restless and I wrote to the *Gazette* people and asked for a job. I got it—I was to run the woman's page of their evening paper, and do Sunday specials. After I arrived the duties of music critic were added, and later I had charge of a Sunday supplement. The people on the *Gazette* were very kind and patiently tutored me through my greenhorn days. The training was excellent and I worked there very happily for several years.

"But I had been trying some magazine work—more light, semi-humorous stuff, and the *Woman's Home Companion* bought several of my pieces. I went to New York to see them in the spring and in the fall I asked them for a job. And got it,—assistant to Miss Gertrude B. Lane, who was then the assistant editor, and is now the editor.

"I have stayed with the *Companion* ever since, save for a year when I went with the ill-starred *Circle,* and now I am managing editor. All this covers a period of over ten years.

"After I got to New York the writing fever got me, and I tried some stories and more short articles of sentiment and humor. Some of these were published and some of them came back to me. More and more I tried to do fiction, and more and more I did it: now I have three books out—*Love at Large, The Blue Envelope* and *The Golden Block*—and another in the works, and I've written innumerable short stories, most of which have been published. Of course

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the very best story I ever wrote I cannot sell. I occasionally run across a copy of that story in my rejected manuscript drawer and I say, 'Never mind—some day I'll wish you on an editor, yet.'

"None of my stories are in the least autobiographical, and I rarely—almost never—put real people or incidents in my stories, and then only as a foundation on which the action of the story may go forward. My stories are built up from my imagination, character after character, plot, action and finale. I try to work out everything logically, and after I have written a story I go over it and turn the cold eye of criticism on its chronology and the convincingness of its detail. Heaven forefend that I should intimate that I make no mistakes in these,—but at least I try to get them right. That is where my long editorial training is an asset.

"Furthermore, what my various characters say does not necessarily reflect my own views or beliefs—I have no propaganda spirit—the story's the thing. Time and time again have indignant readers berated me for beliefs expressed in the speeches of my characters—beliefs which were at wide variance with my own, but perfectly in keeping with the character who expressed them.

"(I seem to be wandering away from my theme, Mr. Overton, and truly, it all seems very silly and flat to me. Here are some unrelated facts which you may be able to use somehow—they sound like the answers to an *Alice in Wonderland* questionnaire.)

"I read heaps of biography and autobiography and fiction and poetry, and I do not read any of these be-

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cause of the possible effect they may have on my work, but because I like to. I read all the magazines, too, but because it is part of my job to see what they are doing. I would rather be unhappy than uncomfortable. I am a good cook and like to do it; indeed I can make better gingerbread and better spoon-bread and better strawberry preserves than any one in the world—this is not arrogance, but a beautiful exceptional truth, as Mr. Bob Davis [Robert H. Davis, editor of *Munsey's Magazine*] would say. I work very hard, all the time, and I do not like parties and teas and such and never go to them, when I can get out of it. I write whenever I have any time and I have trained myself to use any time I can get and to go on with a story without re-reading what I've already written, even after a lapse of several days. I am an individualist without having the least conviction that it's the best thing to be. I do not take my own—or most other people's—writing very seriously. I believe that there was never a time when so many people were writing and writing well, but saying nothing of interest or value. On the other hand, I believe that there is a lot of big work being done and that the mediocre stuff doesn't really obscure it. I'd rather be an editor than a writer, but I like to be both.

"(Now, really—this is getting 'curiouser and curiouser,' to revert again to *Alice*. Will it do—or won't it? And, if not, what have I left unsaid that I ought to have said? I am gradually working myself up, I am afraid, into a state of self-conscious muzziness. And I don't want *that* to go into your book.)"

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So writes Sophie Kerr (Mrs. Sophie Kerr Underwood) in response to an appeal for some information about herself that might legitimately gratify the natural curiosity of her readers. Her readers are a multitude! She has had stories in "all the magazines," so to speak; the statement doesn't exaggerate much. She hasn't had a story, so far as we know, in the *New Republic* but when that Effort decides to take up the publication of short stories doubtless she will!

Mrs. Underwood's short stories need no introduction (to use the sacred formula), and anyway we are here concerned with her as a novelist, and primarily with her as the author of *The Blue Envelope* and *The Golden Block.*

Both these stories are concerned with women in business and there the resemblance pretty nearly stops. *The Blue Envelope* has for its heroine a young girl (who tells the story) under twenty. Leslie Brennan is pretty, a pretty butterfly, used to nothing but spending money and having a joyous if innocent time. She lives with Mrs. Alexander, a woman of family and breeding and wealth. Her guardian, Uncle Bob, pays her bills. But when Mrs. Alexander is summoned to Maine by illness Leslie goes to live with the Morrisons and meets Randall Heath. Heath makes love to her and the shock when she finds out that he was only after her money makes somewhat easier compliance with the unusual wish of her dead father that she spend two years earning her living.

This adventure—earning your living is the greatest adventure in the world and Sophie Kerr can prove it to you!—this enterprise takes Leslie to New York.

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And there she meets Minnie Lacy who has long earned a living and knows a lot about men's neckties, being engaged in the business of making them. And there, also, after getting a stenographer's training and some education in the work of a secretary, Leslie enters the employ of Ewan Kennedy, inventor of explosives.

The "blue envelope" doesn't make its appearance until along toward the end of the story. It contains the formula for a powder which he is going to give to the United States Government—sarnite. The formula must be delivered to the Chief of Ordnance in Washington. Certain persons, agents, presumably, of a foreign government, are bending heaven and earth to get the sarnite formula. They will stop at nothing. And Leslie Brennan has the task of delivering it to the Chief of Ordnance.

Does it sound like a good story? It does. And is it? It is. So good that you feel much more like telling it than analyzing it. But to "give it away" would be a very unfair piece of business. In analyzing it what shall we say? *The Blue Envelope* is simple, straightforward, absorbing and thoroughly enjoyable because of the perfect naturalism of narration. We don't mean realism—abused word! We mean naturalism. And what is naturalism? Why, simply the knack, art, faculty or gift of inventing incidents, drawing characters, writing conversation, describing action in such an unaffected manner that it all seems the most natural thing in the world!

Now realism is never naturalism. A great realist may stick close to life and use actual occurrences or real people in his books but we call him a realist be-

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cause he makes us see in what he sets before us things we never have seen before. Without any desire to be paradoxical—we are dead in earnest—it must be asserted flatly that the realist is as unreal as the romanticist. Often more so. The realist is simply one extreme, of which the romanticist is the other. The naturalist comes in between. And Sophie Kerr is first of all a naturalist in this special sense of the word. Whether her incidents are real or probable or unreal and improbable she never fails in making them plausible, completely so.

It might be argued that to be perfectly and pleasantly and interestingly plausible is better than to achieve the most surprising realism or the most transcendental romance. We think that, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, it is; we believe that unless a writer has that gift in the *n*th degree commonly called genius, unless he is so matchless a romanticist as Joseph Conrad or so unsurpassed a realist as Flaubert or Thomas Hardy, he had better pray and struggle above everything for the faculty of plausibility, interesting plausibility, worth while naturalism! It is because we believe this that we hold Sophie Kerr to have found and to be on the right track. It is because of this our belief in her strong, fledged naturalism that we expect sound and excellent work from her, work showing distinct growth both in intrinsic value and in popular success. The first stage of that growth is evidenced for everybody in the contrast between *The Blue Envelope* and its successor from her pen, *The Golden Block.*

The Golden Block is part of the life story of a business woman, Margaret Bailey, and the most important

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part. The novel finds her a secretary of Henry Golden, manufacturer of paving blocks, and leaves her his partner. It finds her practically a manager of his business at $40 a week and leaves her a sharer in his business at possibly $40,000 a year. The book begins on a note of success, of triumph; the Golden Company has got a contract for street paving in New York which means the difference between hundreds of thousands clear profit and bankruptcy. This has happened mainly because Margaret Bailey is a business woman—a much better business woman than Henry Golden is a business man. Now business women are not too attractively drawn in most of our fiction. They are new people, and the fictioneer is tempted to draw them in too harsh, too straight lines; to caricature a little as Dickens used to caricature, in order to bring out peculiarities and get the "effect." Sophie Kerr doesn't do it with Margaret Bailey; the most praiseworthy and most skillful thing in that admirable story *The Golden Block* is the way in which the author keeps Margaret Bailey human. She does it by naturalism. Margaret is engrossed by the business of the Golden Company but she is also engrossed in securing the education of her sister and brother, the comfort and happiness of her father and mother, the welfare of the whole family. Breath of her life though business is, you feel all the time that she would sacrifice it completely if the happiness of Rose Bailey or the other Baileys collectively required such an offering. But of course the surest way to promote *their* happiness is to succeed herself.

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Margaret Bailey is a character to be proud of and we hope Sophie Kerr is proud of her. She is as clear-visioned as any heroine of fiction; she is as clear-visioned as such women are in life! She is not afraid of being called unwomanly, because she knows that this only means that she does not conform to a handed-down ideal. She does not attempt to formulate a philosophy of sex or love or life on the basis of her own feelings. She speaks and thinks only for herself —not of herself except when asked to explain. She finds no time to indulge in self-pity, but that does not mean that she is hard. No! She is merely happy! She is doing what she can do best and what she most wants to do. "You ought to have been a man," is the recurring refrain dinned in her ears, usually as a tribute of admiration but frequently with an implication of disapproval, as if the Creator had made a mistake somehow. "It's my belief that there's no sex in brains," Margaret falls into the habit of replying. She might have added: "And there's no brains in sex, either!"

If young writers must imitate, must go through a period of playing the sedulous ape, as Stevenson called it, we hope that more of them will cease to imitate the Great and Peculiar Few and imitate such exemplars of intelligent and growing naturalism as Mrs. Underwood. It will make the approach to a recognition of their own powers less painful. And for Sophie Kerr we hope only that she may continue as she has begun and keep growing.

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Books by Sophie Kerr

Love at Large, 1916.
The Blue Envelope, 1917.
The Golden Block, 1918.

Published by Doubleday, Page & Company, New York.

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CHAPTER XIX

MARJORIE BENTON COOKE

OF course Marjorie Benton Cooke is Bambi, or, if you prefer, Bambi is simply Marjorie Benton Cooke. The heroine of the most amusing novel by an American woman in many, many years couldn't be solely the product of an imagination however fine. She couldn't be anything but an imaginative introspection—by which we mean that Miss Cooke could only have created her by following the advice of O. Henry and others before him, to "look into your heart and write."

No matter if not a single event of Bambi's life is autobiographical; no matter if her Father Professor with his mathematical flowerbeds never lived; still less if Jarvis Jocelyn is a pure fantasy. The point is that to write Bambi Miss Cooke had to put her real self in the midst of imagined people and subject her real self to imagined events. This is completely different from the usual method of the skilled fictioneer. He builds his hero or heroine in the first place, but having made the character and infused into it the breath of life the character does the rest. The writer has little governance over his character's actions; these are determined by the character himself and the writer does not much more than set them down. Incredible?

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Not in the least. Thackeray, Scott—we don't know how many writers—testify to the obstinacy with which their people insist on being themselves. Why, an author is really no better off than a parent who brings a child into the world. The parent may transmit to the child certain traits and the author may endow his person with certain qualities; but as the child grows up he takes his own course rather oftener than not, and the fictional person does always! Or if he doesn't we see the author jerking the strings and despise him for it, for the story rings false.

But the book *Bambi* is another matter and precisely what the difference consists in we have tried to show. Let us illustrate it anew. *Bambi* is imagined autobiography. Instead of creating Bambi and letting her go her way Miss Cooke conducted herself through the story. Or, if you want to put it in another way, you may say that she created Bambi and endowed her with certain of her own traits—gayety, courage, tenderness, wit, a love of drama—and then let her go her way. It is because of the intimate personal quality of her heroine that Miss Cooke dedicated her book "To Bambi, with thanks to her for being Herself! M. B. C."

The book is a marvel—an absolute marvel. It sold heavily and promptly, that was to be expected; but the marvel consists not in the book's popularity but in the extraordinary enthusiasm it stirred in its readers. Since no one who has read it seems to be able to avoid the use of superlatives in speaking of it—certainly this writer isn't—it might be best to put aside any attempt at characterization. What follows shall be —analysis!

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The first chapter takes the reader off his feet. Bambi, loving the dreamer Jarvis though perhaps not very consciously loving him, sends for a minister and has herself wedded to him, despite the absent-minded objections of her father, the professor of mathematics. Jarvis needs looking after. This perfectly implausible proceeding is made entirely plausible—you swallow it whole and with immense relish—by just two technical triumphs on Miss Cooke's part.

1. Everything is in dialogue. You are not asked to believe that the Professor is one kind of a person, Bambi another, and Jarvis a third, and all three eminently unlikely; you see them do this and that and you hear them say so and so. Miss Cooke doesn't ask you to believe *her*, she asks you to believe your senses!

2. The dialogue is witty—the wittiest—but there we go off on superlatives again. The dialogue is witty but natural in the completest sense of the word and the wit springs entirely from the situation. No other wit is so good, as any dramatist will tell you.

These two things are the key to the whole story and the key to the utter amazement which overcomes the reader when he applies the test of probability to it—after he has read it through. Of course the wonder of that first chapter could not be entirely sustained through 366 pages, but by the time Miss Cooke's capital starting situation has lost its sharpest edge the plot has reared its head! Oh, yes, there's a plot; all such a story as *Bambi* will stand; a plot with adequate suspense and a steady sweep toward a dénouement. For in a tale like *Bambi* you must not have too much plot;

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the chief interest is ever in the charming and lovable heroine.

But this sketch is all Bambi and none of it Marjorie Benton Cooke, of whom Bambi is only a projection, in dotted lines, as a draughtsman would say. Miss Cooke herself is the daughter of Joseph Henry Cooke and Jessie (Benton) Cooke. She was born in Richmond, Indiana. In 1899 she received the degree of Bachelor of Philosophy at the University of Chicago. In the same year she began writing for the magazines. In fact her first printed "novel" exists as a yellowed clipping in her mother's scrapbook. Underneath it is penned a memorandum: "Published the Sunday after Marjorie received her degree." It was a whimsical episode, the story of a lost dime, divided into two "chapters," and appeared in the Chicago *Record-Herald.* It contained no promise of *Bambi.*

"Marjorie and her doting parents," as Mrs. Cooke once remarked, "thought fame and fortune were hers to command." They weren't. She traveled a long, hard road, writing scraps of humor and satire for newspapers and magazines, concocting little stories and selling them. She was fifteen years away from *Bambi* when she started. But she had the gift for dramatic recitation with which she later endowed that young woman. In 1902 she began touring the United States as a monologist. Dozens of her monologues have been published but will not be found listed at the end of this chapter. Miss Cooke would be the last to expect them to be. They are interesting only as the preparation necessary to write *Bambi,* particularly that first chapter. Miss Cooke has always been inter-

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ested in social questions, as any one who remembers Jarvis Jocelyn's experiences in New York will understand. She is a member of the Little Room Club in Chicago, the Heterodoxy Club and the Women's University Club in New York.

Her books, as distinguished from her printed monologue booklets, began in 1903 with *Modern Monologues,* continued in 1905 with *Dramatic Episodes* and *Plays for Children,* marked time in 1907 with *More Modern Monologues* and budded with a novel, her first novel, in 1910—*The Girl Who Lived in the Woods. Dr. David* appeared in 1911; and there were *To a Mother, The Twelfth Christian,* a dramatic poem, and three one-act plays which were produced—all before *Bambi.*

And Miss Cooke will play a Chopin ballade for you and talk to you with the same lightness, deftness, and fun that Bambi displays. She has forgotten more about the art of talking than the authors of all the conversation books ever knew. She is not obtrusive. The manuscript of her happiest book came to the publishers quite unheralded—just a manuscript in a cardboard box with a note from Miss Cooke saying she would like to have Doubleday, Page & Company consider it. Eugene F. Saxton began it one Sunday afternoon about 5 o'clock, intending to read until six, then go for a walk and have dinner uptown somewhere. He read till seven, looked at the clock, and—went on reading. You can eat any day, you know. . . .

Later a telegram went forth: "*Bambi* is ours. Love at first sight."

Miss Cooke sat to Mary Green Blumenschein for the illustrations to her book; that's why they are what

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they ought to be. And you are to picture her just as you would picture Bambi, say as sitting on a low couch, her feet tucked in, enthroned among billowy cushions, that is, of course, if you, the caller, are really acquainted. It will be sufficient to be acquainted with Bambi when you call.

What else? *Bambi* was followed by *Cinderella Jane* and that interesting tale of the studio cleaner who was married to the painter without love on either side—they made a success of it and were rewarded by becoming lovers—that tale was succeeded by *The Threshold,* in which Miss Cooke chose a theme which would give full and legitimate play to her interest in social problems. A rich bachelor, Gregory Farwell, employs Joan Babcock as housekeeper and companion for himself and his 17-year-old nephew. Farwell's employees strike; the nephew, inspired by Joan, takes the workers' side. The result is a thoroughly dramatic story in which the problems of capital and labor, social relations and the like arise fairly and squarely out of the action and are not foisted on the reader. Miss Cooke manages exceedingly difficult material well.

If you go to interview Miss Cooke about her own beliefs on serious subjects she will answer you out of the mouths of her people in *The Threshold,* and chiefly from the utterances of Joan Babcock—which does not mean that she makes her characters say what she wants to say to the world at large. No! It means merely that she herself has advanced no farther along the path to an answer to all these questions than Joan Babcock got. When Miss Cooke started to write *The Threshold* she knew, as a good novelist does, exactly

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what she wanted to do. She wanted to find out how a certain type of ardent young American woman feels about the future and its social and industrial problems. You ask: why didn't she go out and, finding a woman of that type, ask her? To do that was to run risks. You might not find the young woman. She might return evasive answers or answers either intentionally or unintentionally misleading—so few of us really know what we think about anything in the future! There was just one safe and certain way to set about it, and that was to create a young woman of the sort Miss Cooke had in mind, put her in the midst of events, and see what she would say and do, what she would come to believe about the things ahead.

Miss Cooke's *The Clutch of Circumstance,* on the other hand, is just a good mystery yarn about secret service work and international plots—but based on fact. It has a serious defect in that the heroine, some of whose qualities are plainly exhibited for the reader's admiration, is guilty of atrocious treachery, becoming, in fact, a German spy!

Miss Cooke? She is going ahead, thank you! She is going ahead in the wisest way in the world for a person of her special gifts. What was said in *The Threshold* about Joan is the best thing to say about her author: "The world is thrust forward by such dynamic personalities as yours, even by your mistakes. There is danger in action, but more in tranquil inaction, in feeble acquiescence in the face of injustice and wrong."

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Books by Marjorie Benton Cooke

Modern Monologues, 1903.
Dramatic Episodes, 1905.
Plays for Children, 1905.
More Modern Monologues, 1907.
The Girl Who Lived in the Woods, 1910.
Dr. David, 1911.
Bambi, 1914.
The Dual Alliance, 1915.
Cinderella Jane, 1917.
The Threshold, 1918.
The Clutch of Circumstance, 1918.

The Girl Who Lived in the Woods and Dr. David are published by A. C. McClurg & Company, Chicago; Miss Cooke's later novels are published by Doubleday, Page & Company, New York; but The Clutch of Circumstance is published by George H. Doran Company, New York.

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CHAPTER XX

GRACE S. RICHMOND

WHY do some of Grace S. Richmond's books sell faster than the books of any other American woman writer? Because they do! And their popularity has no relation whatever to their size. Some of the littlest—*On Christmas Day in the Morning, On Christmas Day in the Evening,* and *The Enlisting Wife,* for instances—sell most rapidly. Not the size; perhaps it has something to do with the substance!

No perhaps about it! Mrs. Richmond has, more perfectly than most of her contemporaries, the gift for disclosing the simplest and deepest feelings of men and women everywhere in just those words which are at the back of our heads and hardly ever on our lips. They are the words we ache to utter but never quite bring ourselves to say. She says them for us. She makes articulate and perfect the full feeling that is in us. She is our emotional self—that part of self which is a common possession—touched with pentecostal fire. When we read her we have the delight of self-expression blended with a feeling of gratefulness to her for affording it to us.

These are strong words. Gush, some will call them. Well, among the people of repressed instincts there

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is one instinct seldom repressed—the instinct to sneer at those who let themselves go. This is an inconsistency which will trouble them (we point it out that they may give themselves over to their favorite delight of self-torture) but which bothers the rest of us not at all. We know—the rest of us—full well that the emotionalism of which Mrs. Richmond is the most successful exponent is a cleansing and refreshing exercise. We read her and come away a little surer of ourselves and of the world about us. For the essence of that world is the people in it and there is something in most people that does not change.

Mrs. Richmond has written many books. The only exact fact to be stated is that in 1914—and several of her most successful books have appeared since—she had sold 400,000 copies. The total must be well on to the million mark by now. Then there are the cheaper editions of her earlier stories; there are the readers of her work in the *Ladies' Home Journal* and other publications; there are the libraries where copies of her are always "out" and there are new circles of readers, each book being much like a stone breaking the surface of a pond and making its own widening ripples;—no matter. Millions read Mrs. Richmond. That is enough to know. It is the achievement of a quiet, country-dwelling woman whose publishers have a time to get her to be photographed!

She lives in Fredonia, New York, and the sketch of her life is a bare outline. She was born in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, the daughter of the Rev. Charles Edwards Smith, D.D., and Catherine A. (Kimball) Smith. Her father was a Baptist clergyman, the au-

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thor of *The Baptism of Fire* and *The World Lighted*. Grace was an only child. While she was still a young girl the family moved to Syracuse, New York. There the daughter was educated in the Syracuse High School and under private tutors, following college courses of study under their direction. She gave some indications of the writer's gift before her marriage, in 1887, to Dr. Nelson Guernsey Richmond of Fredonia. But the wife of a young physician with a growing practice has not a great deal of leisure. It was not until 1891 that Mrs. Richmond, whose first work was short stories for magazines, attracted special attention by a story which appeared in the Thanksgiving number of the *Ladies' Home Journal.*

It had come in as hundreds of other things come in, had been read by the principal reader and had by him been handed directly to the editor, who accepted it without delay. The story was called *The Flowing Shoe-String* and described the reformation, through love, of a charmingly untidy little literary genius. Mrs. Richmond remembers it very well! She found herself in rather notable company—Mrs. A. D. T. Whitney, Frances E. Willard, Ella Wheeler Wilcox, the Rev. T. De Witt Talmage and Russell Sage were other contributors to that Thanksgiving number.

Very, very modest, and very, very busy, Mrs. Richmond did not deluge the editor with other work. In fact, seven whole years passed before she made her second appearance in the *Ladies' Home Journal,* in 1898, with *A Silk-Lined Girl.* It was the Thanksgiving number again. The company had changed but was still notable; Henry M. Stanley, Caroline At-

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water Mason and Mary E. Wilkins, now Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, were on the table of contents.

This second bow was the real introduction to her audience. Since 1898 Mrs. Richmond has been among the magazine's most steady and popular contributors. For twelve years, from 1902 to 1913, not a year went by when she was not represented in its pages. Her most successful work has had its first appearance there. May and June of 1902 brought to the *Journal's* readers the first of a series of tales about Juliet which became, in 1905, a book, *The Indifference of Juliet.* Juliet's indifference was toward a young author in relation to the subject of marriage. Naturally interest in her did not stop with *The Indifference of Juliet* and so, in 1907, her further experiences as communicated to the *Journal's* readers were published between covers under the title *With Juliet in England.*

Mrs. Richmond is a doctor's wife. In 1910 she created the character for whom she is most widely known and thanked—Redfield Pepper Burns, the generous, red-haired young doctor of uncertain temper and humane impulses of whom we haven't heard the last yet. *Red Pepper Burns* was followed by *Mrs. Red Pepper* and *Red Pepper's Patients.* But hold on—not so fast. In 1906, between the two Juliet books, Mrs. Richmond had given us the story of *The Second Violin.* In 1908 came *Around the Corner in Gay Street,* in 1909 *A Court of Inquiry;* there were also the two Christmas booklets—*On Christmas Day in the Morning* (1908) and *On Christmas Day in the Evening* (1910). Between *Red Pepper Burns* and *Mrs. Red Pepper* appeared *Strawberry Acres* and a

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year after *Mrs. Red Pepper* was published *The Twenty-fourth of June.*

But this is becoming a mere catalogue, and the place for a list of Mrs. Richmond's books is at the end of this chapter. What we want to do here is to consider her writing, or a few fragments of it as representative as may be, and try to see what she does and how she does it.

Let it be said at the outset that she makes slips which would be inexcusable if we did not all make the same slips. In the second chapter of *Red Pepper's Patients* Dr. Burns has sheltered a Hungarian violinist who is now playing for the physician and his wife: "Warmed and fed, his Latin nature leaping up from its deep depression to the exaltation of the hour, the appeal he made to them was intensely pathetic." The Hungarians are not a Latin race, but we know what she means, so why be bothered? "His attitude, as he stood before his hosts, had the unconscious grace of the foreigner." Of any foreigner—they are all graceful! Hang it! We always think of them as unconsciously graceful. Why quibble?

Mrs. Richmond can be humorous in the most natural way. From *The Twenty-fourth of June:*

"'Rufus,' said his wife solemnly, following him into the white-tiled bathroom, 'I want you should look at those bath-towels. I never in my life set eyes on anything like them. They must have cost—I don't know what they cost—I didn't know there were such bath-towels made!'

"'I don't want to wrap myself in a blanket,' asserted her husband. 'I want to know I've got a towel

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in my hand, that I can whisk round me and slap myself with. Look here, let's get to bed. . . .

" 'Ruth,' said he, with sudden solemnity, 'I forgot to undress in my dressing-room. Had I better put my clothes on and go take 'em off again in there?' "

It is funny because it is so exactly what we do say in such situations. It is naturalism of a very high order and the more humorous for being entirely unforced.

In the creation of character Mrs. Richmond is at her best simply because she differentiates her people ever so slightly from what, lacking a better word, we generally call types. Her main triumph is evenly shared in this field and that other, of which we spoke at the outset. *Red Pepper Burns* was a very great success as novels go and Redfield Pepper Burns is a very distinct success as the persons of fiction go; but the Christmas stories that Mrs. Richmond has written and such intimate little heart messages as *The Enlisting Wife* and *The Whistling Mother* are just as successful. Take the opening of *The Enlisting Wife:*

"Judith Taine, who was married to Lieutenant Kirke Wendell, Junior, just before he sailed for France, is keeping in a small blue book a little record which he may see when he returns. It begins with the last paragraph of a letter from her young husband.

" 'If you hadn't enlisted with me, my Judith, I shouldn't be half the man I'm beginning to hope I am, over here in France. If manhood means standing up straight and strong, facing the future without the old boyish love of ease and snug corners—then—well—time will prove me, anyhow. Darling, can you guess

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how you are with me, every waking moment—and some of the sleeping ones too, when I'm lucky? My wife—even though I could be with her only those few hours after Father married us—how absolutely she is that! My enlisting wife, my fighting comrade!—*O Judith!*'

"I don't cry often—not I, Judith Taine Wendell. I can't afford to cry, there's too much to be done. But that last paragraph did bring the tears—happy ones—and I kissed the dear words again and again before I tucked the letter away in the warm place where each one lives, day and night, till the next one comes. O Kirke! Even you don't know yet how 'absolutely' I am your wife!"

Such writing is insusceptible of analysis; it admits only of characterization. We all know how hostile some of the characterization is likely to be, but the fact remains that Mrs. Richmond has contrived perfectly to set down *not* the things the Judith Wendells and Kirke Wendells actually say and write but the unspoken thought that gives body and coloring to their actual words. It is what we wish we could say and write that Mrs. Richmond gives us. She transliterates the true feeling. Remember, it is not our feeling but the depth of it that we are habitually ashamed to show. It is only necessary to make that reflection to understand Mrs. Richmond's success. She is as popular with our emotional selves as would be a person who should write letters for the unfortunate inhabitants of an illiterate community. Most of us are emotional illiterates and are likely to remain so. We need Mrs. Richmond and more like her.

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Books by Grace S. Richmond

The Indifference of Juliet, 1905.
With Juliet in England, 1907.
Round the Corner in Gay Street, 1908.
Red Pepper Burns, 1910.
Strawberry Acres, 1911.
Mrs. Red Pepper, 1913.
The Second Violin, 1906.
A Court of Inquiry, 1909.
On Christmas Day in the Morning, 1908.
On Christmas Day in the Evening, 1910.
The Twenty-fourth of June, 1914.
Under the Country Sky.
Under the Christmas Stars.
The Brown Study.
Red Pepper's Patients, 1917.
The Whistling Mother, 1917.
The Enlisting Wife, 1918.
Brotherly House.

The first six books are published by A. L. Burt Company, New York; the rest by Doubleday, Page & Company, New York.

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CHAPTER XXI

WILLA SIBERT CATHER

SOME novelists are at their best in their first novels; others do their best work after a long apprenticeship in the public eye; a few show steady growth and a very few show steady and rapid growth. Of these last is Willa Sibert Cather.

She has written four novels. You pick up *Alexander's Bridge* and read with discriminating pleasure. It is a fine piece of work. It is—excellent is the word, yes, excellent and artistically fine all through. The story is sound and gives a sort of æsthetic delight if you are susceptible to purely æsthetic delights in literature. But there is nothing about this very short tale of a great man who fissured and fell to make a deep impression. However, some time later you come upon another book by the same author and start to read.

Then what a shock; then what reverberations in your heart as well as your head (for even an empty head will reverberate and perhaps rather better than a filled one). *O Pioneers!* is in its way an epic of the Western plains; it is wholly epic in its emotional force and sweeping panorama, though not in rich detail. The first chapter engages you and the second chapter enthralls you. Thereafter you are a thorough be-

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liever in the literary gift of Willa Sibert Cather. But though intensely satisfied with *O Pioneers!* you never for a moment expect more of her—perhaps because it does not seem as if to expect more would be in any way reasonable.

A year or so passes. You get hold of a new novel by her, as much thicker than *O Pioneers!* as *O Pioneers!* was thicker than *Alexander's Bridge*. It is called *The Song of the Lark*. You eye it speculatively. You start to read it confidently but not breathlessly. And ere you are halfway through you know that she has excelled herself again.

The Song of the Lark is a much bigger thing than her second novel in every respect except one—it has not the same peculiar quality of seeming to sum up in a single life the whole history of a part of America in the period of that life. But wait—think a moment. Does not this chronicle of Thea Kronberg, the singer, sum up in a single life the whole emotional history of thousands of lives? Why, yes; you had not thought of it but that is so! Thea Kronberg the girl, struggling ahead toward some goal as yet unsuspected; Thea Kronberg the woman, fighting with all her force to gain a goal perceived but hopelessly distant; Thea Kronberg the great singer, fighting and triumphing for the sake of the fight—what is this but the record of every superb artist who has ever lived?

From the wonder of those second and third books, each so much bigger than the one before, we turn somewhat bewilderedly to the probable wonder of the woman who could—and did—write them. But here no wonder lies. At least, you may read the external

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record of Willa Sibert Cather's life and find nothing that fully, or even adequately, explains her growth as a novelist. If there were only a hint! But read through this bit of autobiography and see if you can find any.

"Willa Sibert Cather was born near Winchester, Virginia, the daughter of Charles Fectigue Cather and Virginia Sibert Boak. Though the Siberts were originally Alsatians, and the Cathers came from County Tyrone, Ireland, both families had lived in Virginia for several generations. When Willa Cather was 9 years old her father left Virginia and settled on a ranch in Nebraska, in a very thinly populated part of the State where the acreage of cultivated land was negligible beside the tremendous stretch of raw prairie. There were very few American families in that district; all the near neighbors were Scandinavians, and ten or twelve miles away there was an entire township settled by Bohemians.

"For a child accustomed to the quiet and the established order behind the Blue Ridge, this change was very stimulating. There was no school near at hand, and Miss Cather lived out of doors, winter and summer. She had a pony and rode about the Norwegian and Bohemian settlements, talking to the old men and women and trying to understand them. The first two years on the ranch were probably more important to her as a writer than any that came afterward.

"After some preparation in the high school at Red Cloud, Nebraska, Miss Cather entered the State University of Nebraska, graduated at 19, and immediately went to Pittsburgh and got a position on the Pitts-

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burgh *Leader*. She was telegraph editor and dramatic critic on this paper for several years and then gave it up to take the place of the head of the English department in the Allegheny High School.

"While she was teaching in the Allegheny High School she published her first book of verse, *April Twilights*, and her first book of short stories, *The Troll Garden*. The latter book attracted a good deal of attention, and six months after it was published, in the winter of 1906, Miss Cather went to New York to accept a position on the staff of *McClure's Magazine*. From 1908 until the autumn of 1912 Miss Cather was managing editor of *McClure's Magazine*, and during these four years did no writing at all. In the fall of 1912 she took a house in Cherry Valley, New York, and wrote a short novel, *Alexander's Bridge*, and a novelette, *The Bohemian Girl*, both of which appeared serially in *McClure's Magazine*. In the spring of 1913 Miss Cather went for a long stay in Arizona and New Mexico, penetrating to some of the many hardly-accessible Cliff Dweller remains and the remote mesa cities of the Pueblo Indians.

"Miss Cather has an apartment at 5 Bank street in New York, where she lives in winter. In the summer she goes abroad or returns to the West. This summer [1915] she refused a tempting offer to write a series of articles on the war situation in Europe to explore the twenty-odd miles of Cliff Dweller remains that are hidden away in the southwest corner of Colorado, near Mancos and Durango."

Very nice, but it tells you nothing that you need to know if you are to frame a hypothesis to account for

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Miss Cather's astonishingly rapid progress as a novelist. The material for *O Pioneers!* and *The Song of the Lark,* or a good deal of it, was patently gathered in her impressionable girlhood. The fine chapters of *The Song of the Lark* which relate Thea Kronberg's stay in the Cliff Dweller region with Fred Ottenburg are outwardly explained by Miss Cather's personal interest in these ruins. What is not made in the least clear is the secret of her own success. Let us look into some of the things she has said and see if we can find a clew to it there.

"I have never found any intellectual excitement more intense than I used to feel when I spent a morning with one of these pioneer women at her baking or buttermaking. I used to ride home in the most unreasonable state of excitement; I always felt as if they told me so much more than they said—as if I had actually got inside another person's skin. If one begins that early it is the story of the man-eating tiger over again—no other adventure ever carries one quite so far."

Do you detect something? Do you perceive (1) a set of impressions acquired at the most plastic age and with a sharpness of configuration never to be lost and (2) an extraordinary blend of intellectual and emotional feeling—of heart and mind—which carried the girl *beyond* the spoken word; and also (3) an imaginative faculty which could go on living a thing after merely hearing about it and living it through to the unnarrated, possibly unexperienced, conclusion? Do you get a hint of any or all of these things? Of course you do!

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Going further we learn that when Miss Cather began to write she tried to put the Swedish and Bohemian settlers she had known in her girlhood into her short stories. "The results," we are informed, "never satisfied her." She discussed this dissatisfaction afterward.

"It is always hard to write about the things that are near your heart," she argued. "From a kind of instinct of self-protection you distort and disguise them. Those stories were so poor that they discouraged me. I decided that I wouldn't write any more about the country and the people for whom I had a personal feeling.

"Then I had the good fortune to meet Sarah Orne Jewett, who had read all of my early stories and had very clear and definite opinions about them and about where my work fell short. She said: 'Write it as it is, don't try to make it like this or that. You can't do it in anybody else's way; you will have to make a way of your own. If the way happens to be new, don't let that frighten you. Don't try to write the kind of short story that this or that magazine wants; write the truth and let them take it or leave it.'

"It is that kind of honesty, that earnest endeavor to tell truly the thing that haunts the mind, that I love in Miss Jewett's own work. I dedicated *O Pioneers!* to her because I had talked over some of the characters with her, and in this book I tried to tell the story of the people as truthfully and simply as if I were telling it to her by word of mouth."

Ah! This is downright enlightening. Miss Cather does not specifically say that she had to depart from

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actual persons when she came to do her good work, but that is the inference we draw. She does not entirely lay bare the real reason; and for the benefit of those who may be puzzled over it let us supplement what she says.

There is a pitch of emotion at which the artist cannot work; he can only see, feel, learn, store up; the rendering of what he has felt and seen comes afterward. Wordsworth said that poetry was emotion recollected in tranquillity. He might just as well have extended the definition to include all forms of art. When you or I come to sit down and put on paper actual persons whom we knew and loved (or hated) we cannot do it if the feeling is still very strong, any more than we can write about them while loving or hating them. Our hands shake and our emotional and mental disturbance is so great that we cannot collect our thoughts, or, if we contrive to collect them partially, we cannot put them down on paper. Tears blur the vision. We have to wait, then, until a little time has passed and we are calmer; until we can *recall* in a warm, remembering glow, the feeling of that time, recall it just sufficiently for our artist's purpose. We sail through it then, but are not awash.

Very often this intensity of feeling about actual persons so persists as to make it impracticable to write honestly about them at all. And so the artist is thrown back on his imagination for the bodying forth of other persons and characters, typical enough, real enough, true enough, but not the flesh of his flesh and blood of his blood. About these creations of his own he can write and write well. And this, we are surmising, is

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the experience that Miss Cather underwent as so many others have undergone it before her.

In her case the difference was that she had an imagination to come to her rescue. So few have! Or rather, so few have an adequate imaginative faculty, one that will bear them forward, one that will sustain their created people, that will meet every demand made upon its resources early and late, that will not flag, that will not weary, that will not die in the middle of the creative task.

We have built up our hypothesis. Now let us see if we can support it.

"According to Miss Cather, all the material for her writing had been collected before she was 20 years old. 'I have had nothing really new since that time,' she said. 'Every story I have written since then has been a recollection of some childhood experience, of something that touched me while a youngster. You must know a subject as a child, before you ever had any idea of writing, to instill into it, in a story, the true feeling. After you grow up impressions don't come so easily. And it is for the purpose of recalling the old feelings I had in my youth that I come West every summer. The West has for me that something which excites me, and gives me what I want and need to write a story.'"

Surely this is all the confirmation we need. She goes West to get the warm, remembering glow that is necessary for her artist's purpose.

Let us consider her four books.

Alexander's Bridge might have been written by Edith Wharton. It has only one fault, a certain

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cloudiness characteristic of finely-written stories in which the mentality of one or two of the characters is of the essence of the whole thing. It needs for its full appreciation Miss Cather's own explication of its purpose. She says:

"The bridge builder with whom this story is concerned began life a pagan, a crude force, with little respect for anything but youth and work and power. He married a woman of much more discriminating taste and much more clearly defined standards. He admires and believes in the social order of which she is really a part, though he has been only a participant. Just so long as his ever-kindling energy exhibits itself only in his work, everything goes well; but he runs the risk of encountering new emotional as well as new intellectual stimuli [a pity that in the effort to explain it should be necessary to resort to this jargon!].

"The same qualities which made for his success involve him in a personal relationship [with an actress, a youthful love] which poisons his peace of mind and dissipates his working power. His behavior changes, but his ideals do not.

"He was the kind of a man who had to think well of himself. His relation to his wife was not a usual one; when he hurt her, he hurt his self-respect and lost his sense of power. His bridge fell because he himself had been torn in two ways and had lost his singleness of purpose which makes a man effective. He had failed to give it the last ounce of himself, the ounce that puts through every great undertaking."

There! That last paragraph's better! It makes quite clear the inner action of the novel. And the only

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fault with the novel, we repeat, is that this inner action should be clear right there! It should not be necessary for any one of ordinary intelligence to have to read Miss Cather's explanation of what really takes place inside Bartley Alexander.

O Pioneers! is utterly different. Some one has said that reading a novel by Miss Cather gives you no assurance at all as to what her next novel will be like. That seems to be true. It is the stamp, we may add, of a very original gift—talent—genius; the degree of her endowment is not precisely determinable even yet. In *O Pioneers!* it is a woman who dominates the whole story, tall, strong, sensible, not so much kind-hearted as human-hearted, which means a great comprehension with sympathy to serve it. We see the girl Alexandra and her two brothers left by a dying father with the charge to hold to the land, the untamed soil of the prairie. The father has made his daughter the head of the family because she has intelligence and her brothers have not. They work well, but they do not use their heads in their work. The girl justifies her father's faith in her and by her intelligent anticipation makes her brothers prosperous and herself rich. There is a third brother, distinctly younger than the others, whom she has under her especial care and upon whom she lavishes the maternal affection that is in her. The terrible tragedy which involves him would have blasted irretrievably a woman less strong, less intelligent than Alexandra. She survives it as she would survive anything that life could do to her.

The quality of the story is dual. There is the fidelity to character which marks the true novelist, the

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resolute putting through of what these people, in contact with each other, will certainly bring about. That calls for courage! How severe the temptation to shirk an inevitable but bitter event! It is so easy to persuade yourself that this and that will not mean disaster, that such and such chemicals when joined need not explode, that oil and water will mix this once, that two and two may for the moment make five! Why must there be a blighting catastrophe? Why cannot a happy ending be a truthful ending? The answer is that sometimes it can, but when it can't you mustn't make it so. Miss Cather's *O Pioneers!* doesn't try to.

The second aspect of this novel we have already named. It is cyclic, that is, it sums up an era. Such a quality always gives a book a historical value; where it is wedded to high fictional art, as here, the satisfaction of the reader is complete.

The Song of the Lark gains over *O Pioneers!* in the first place by its sheer bulk. *O Pioneers!* was a series of scenes in a single but changing setting; to cover so much ground, in point of time, the author had to strip her action of all that was not indispensable. But as *The Song of the Lark* is entirely centered about the development of a single person there is a chance to enrich the narrative with no end of detail; more, it is necessary to do so. For here we are trying to come at the innermost secret of Thea Kronberg, we are trying to find out what—*what*—it was in her that made her great. To get at that we must have exhaustively every item which can be made to contribute the least mite of information. We must have every-

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thing about her from her girlhood to her success on the New York stage, we must have all the persons who came in contact with her and who had their effect on her, or upon whom she had her effect, for it was generally that way about! We must have her as she appeared to each and every one of the few really privileged to know her. What they saw and said, the conclusions they drew, are the material from which we have to dig out the secret. And Miss Cather gives us all we need. She is replete with the facts and she puts them in their entirety before us. The result is a biography, no less; but a biography unencumbered with letters and irrelevant conversations and unimportant views and the unendurable conscientiousness of the faithfully recording friend.

My Antonia is a book to be put alongside *O Pioneers!* It is less epical but of more historical value for its minute and colorful depiction of life on the Nebraska prairies and in the Nebraska towns about 1885. The book is really a chronicle of people and their surroundings, a mosaic of character sketches and scenes and short stories brought within a single ken. The material ranges from tragedy, horror and repellent occurrences to pathos, humor and farce. It is perfectly handled, however; the reader is never offended and is variously touched and amused—and always the book is engrossing. Such a book is worth a dozen formal historical records. And the figure of Antonia Cuzak is a biographical triumph. Reminiscence here surpasses fiction.

There is no more to be said and it may easily be that too much has been said already. If this chapter has

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been too venturesome in its inferences and too declamatory in its exposition, forgive that, O reader! If you have read Miss Cather's notable novels you may disagree but you will understand and condone; if you have not read them you will be more indulgent toward us after doing so; and actually if what we have said shall lead you to read her books the whole of our striving will have been fulfilled. She is a novelist whose work already adds measurably to American literature; whether all of us put the same estimate upon her accomplishment does not matter at all; it matters supremely that as many of us as possible should be acquainted with it.

BOOKS BY WILLA SIBERT CATHER

April Twilights, 1903. R. G. Badger, Boston.
The Troll Garden, 1905. Doubleday, Page & Co., New York.
Alexander's Bridge, 1912.
O Pioneers! 1913.
The Song of the Lark, 1915.
My Antonia, 1918.

Miss Cather's books are published by Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.

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CHAPTER XXII

CLARA LOUISE BURNHAM

TO write twenty-six books is something, is it not? To have written twenty-six books which have sold half a million copies (the publisher's offhand guess) is something else again and more. Clara Louise Burnham has done that; and the cold arithmetical statement does not begin to convey the real nature of her achievement. You must read her to know how capable a novelist she is, how expert, how gifted with humor, insight, fertility in those slight inventions which make up the reality of a fictionist's whole. Mrs. Burnham's writings are associated in the minds of many thousands who have not read her tales, or have read only a few of them, with the doctrines of Christian Science. And it is true that she is the author of several novels in which the principles of this faith are of the essence of the stories. Equally true is it that she has said of her book, *Jewel*:

"I like *Jewel* best. I think she is my high water mark. It is a Christian Science book and without the Christian Science terminology that is used in the story it, well, it would be a kind of second *Little Lord Fauntleroy,* and besides, it wouldn't be *Jewel.*"

Which may be so but which does not hold true of *The Right Princess.* There the identification of

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Frances Rogers's beliefs with the faith of which Mrs. Eddy was the founder is not indispensable to the narrative. Miss Rogers need not have been a Scientist. We should still have an unusual and effectively told story, a novel quite as entertaining and worth the reader's while as *The Opened Shutters,* from which the terminology of the Scientists is entirely absent.

The point we would make, then, the point that ought, in sheer honesty, to be made at the very outset of any consideration of Mrs. Burnham's work, is her genuine and incontestable achievement as a straightway, out-and-out, talented story-teller, a pure and simple fictioneer, an experienced and popular American novelist. That some of her novels have probably done more to put Christian Science precepts before the world in what the Scientist believes to be the true light than anything ever written other than the church's texts—that this is so may be granted. But it is not a fact we have to concern ourselves with here. We concede it and pass on. We pass on in either direction, going back to the fourteen books which preceded *The Right Princess* or forward to the eight novels which have appeared since *The Leaven of Love.* They are the bulk of Mrs. Burnham's work. And yet —it is to be feared we shall have to bestow most of our attention upon the six books between! They represent Mrs. Burnham's widest popularity and what is possibly her best work judged strictly in literary aspects. But enough of this for the present; it is time enough to cross bridges when we come to them. Let us first get a glimpse of Mrs. Burnham herself.

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A tall woman, spare in build, with light hair, blue eyes and a merry manner, a conversationalist with anecdotes, a manner of great simplicity, serenity, calm pleasantness. She was the eldest daughter of George F. Root, as popular a songwriter as this country has produced. Born in Newton, Massachusetts, she has lived most of her life in Chicago. She summers in Maine. Her education was in the public and in private schools in Chicago, and at the New Church School, Waltham, Massachusetts. Politically she is, or was, a Progressive; and at this point we cannot do better than to quote her own words in the Chicago *Record-Herald* of November 24, 1912:

"People who see the large, sunshiny hotel room in which I work, whose bay windows command a wide expanse of lake, say that they no longer wonder at the good cheer of my stories. If I ever had the blues I should believe in the water cure. I have always believed in the ounce of prevention. Indeed, I try it all summer up in Maine.

"Bailey Island, my summer home, is only a small green hill in the superb sweep of the Atlantic. My cottage stands eighty feet above the sea, and there is nothing but water between me and Europe. It is great fun for a woman who usually lives at a hotel to keep house three months of the year.

"But Bailey Island is not an inspiring place. I never work in summer. My father always told me to let the water in the reservoir fill up then. Besides, a brick wall is all the view I want when I am at work. Even this dear Lake Michigan is almost too distracting at times.

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"Lake Michigan explains why I have not followed the tide of successful writers to New York. I love Chicago, with all its soot and wind. I am naturally optimistic, and therefore expect that within the next decade the Illinois Central will be electrified. Then won't this spot be a winter paradise?

"Nevertheless, it is tempting to use my island as a background for my stories. In *The Inner Flame* I have gone back to it again. Besides, the Villa Chantecler is a real place—a henhouse cleared and renovated by an enthusiastic young artist and given that clever name. The Chantecler studio was too picturesque an incident not to become material.

"However, very little of my material is taken from real life. It is playing with fire to draw recognizable portraits of people; but I fancy nearly all authors are quite aware that they are making composite pictures of friends or acquaintances. For instance, the man who inspired the character of Philip Sidney, the hero of *The Inner Flame,* is a brother-in-law of John McCutcheon; while Edgar Fabian's personality and mannerisms are copied faithfully from another one of my friends whose character is as different from Edgar's as can be imagined. It is very seldom that any individual appeals to me as material, but when he or she does, I generally fall. Inasmuch as in all my books there is not one villain, I should not think they would mind.

"I have been asked whether I have a 'method' in writing. I have—necessarily. Genius has inspirations. It writes in the night, or walking in the field, and burns cords of cigarettes. Mere talent must be

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persistent and industrious, and can often forego cigarettes.

"When I was a very young girl I read something Miss Mulock said apropos of writing which made a deep impression. It was this: 'An author should go to his desk as regularly as a carpenter to his bench, and with as little thought of inspiration.' I point to my twenty novels as a proof that I have heeded that direction; for if any one doubts the manual labor of book writing let him pick up any story and copy a chapter from it in long hand. I have averaged one novel a year, yet my maximum period of daily work is three morning hours.

"If a young person aspiring to print should ask me whether there is a definite way to begin, I should tell him to start by catching a big brother. Preferably his own, for any one else's might be a hindrance. Mine is Frederick W. Root, ex-president of the Literary Club, Cliff Dweller, Little Roomer, and in many other respects an orthodox Chicagoan. He has been my mascot ever since the day when he started on the labor—and hard labor it was—of drawing a young sister away from the music which was her chief interest and starting her at story writing. You know I am one of the Roots. My father, George F. Root, was known chiefly by his war songs, *Tramp, Tramp, Tramp* and *The Battle Cry of Freedom* and so on, but every home in the land knows his simple, melodious songs, and I should like to feel that the vitality in my unpretentious stories is akin to the spontaneous harmony that flowed for fifty happy years from his clear mind.

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"I suppose the reason I did not wish to write was that music satisfied me. My brother persisted against my indifference for a year. At last we were both exasperated. He shut me into a room with him one day, and opening a very business-like looking knife, declared with a fearful scowl that I should not leave that room alive unless I promised to try faithfully to write a story. I laughed a little and wept a little, and at last promised to show him that I couldn't do it.

"Some one asked him once in my presence why he was so certain that I could write. He replied: 'Oh, she has a picturesque way of telling things and isn't too much hampered by the truth.' I forgive him even such aspersions. He is an example of what 'a heart at leisure from itself' can do for another. I owe him everything; above all the blessed assurance which sometimes reaches me that my stories help others.

"It is wonderful that I met no obstacles in starting. With no conscious preparation I was like a ship ready to be launched. Fred pushed me off into deep water.

"I enjoy my work, but not quite in the carefree way I used to enjoy it. With each new book now I am conscious of some anxiety not to disappoint my large parish; not to go backward. Both in books and plays I believe the destructive is doomed. In this world there exists only one rose without a thorn. There are many larger, more alluring, more fragrant, but there is only one thornless rose; it is work that you love."

Mrs. Burnham rather minimizes the difficulties of getting started. Her first stories were unfavorably passed upon but the verdicts did not deter her. A poem sent to *Wide Awake* was her first accepted work.

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No Gentlemen was her first novel. It should be stated that her mother also was musically gifted. Though born in Newton, Massachusetts, the girl lived for some years in North Reading, Massachusetts. She was nine when the family went to Chicago to live. She was married young and it was after her marriage that her brother induced her to write. She is a member of the Little Room Club of Chicago and lives there at The Elms Hotel. Her first play, or rather the first play made from one of her books, was *The Right Princess,* and when, after the usual hitches, it was staged smoothly at the Alcazar Theater in San Francisco late in 1912, Mrs. Burnham confessed to the dramatist's deepest thrill. "I will not act the doting parent except to say that after so many years of seeing one's characters in black and white on the printed page you can't imagine how fascinating it is to watch them move about in the flesh, your own creations, speaking your own lines; and then my first—my very first—villain lives in that little play."

To get to Bailey Island, Mrs. Burnham's summer home in Maine, you go first to Portland, where the author is as "widely and favorably known" as if she had lived there all her life. It is, in fact, almost a quarter of a century since she began spending her summers in Maine. She has failed to show up but rarely since 1894, although she did spend two summers abroad and one visiting Yellowstone Park. "I only spared a summer to go to Yellowstone because it was open only in summer," she explained afterward. Her Bailey Island house, a roomy shingled structure, stands on a steep, shelving headland, not rocky but covered

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with grass and with a pebbled beach at its foot. It is called The Mooring. Beside it stands her brother's house, of the same character but a little larger. The view is over the Atlantic and Casco Bay and you may see the White Mountains clearly. The story of how Mrs. Burnham came to live there is related, with changes of names, in her novel *Dr. Latimer*. The old tide mill, which figures so importantly in *The Opened Shutters*, was a real mill which, two years after the novel's appearance in 1906, sank into the sea. Do you remember this passage in the last chapter of *The Opened Shutters*?

"She paused, her lips apart, her eyes wide, for all at once she caught sight of the Tide Mill. Every one of its shutters had turned back. The sunlight was flooding in. She grew pale, sank down upon a rock near by, and gazed." And then a few pages later John Dunham's words to Sylvia Lacey:

"'You said Love would open the shutters, and it has.'" The incident is charged with a special significance in the story. It appears that when the real mill disappeared a coincidence was noted, the sort of thing that many persons prefer to think no coincidence at all. We quote from the Portland *Evening Express* of July 31, 1909:

"It seems that one day last summer Captain Morrill of the Harpswell Steamboat Company, who is not too fond of story reading, picked up *The Opened Shutters* to read. His wife in telling about it to Mrs. Burnham said that he read the story far into the night, not being willing to put it down till he had read the last word. The next day when he was sailing down the

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bay, his attention was suddenly directed to the old Tide Mill. He looked at it long and steadily. Could it be? Were his eyes deceiving him? Had he read so late and thought so deeply on the story that things did not look quite natural to him? He looked at the old mill again. Yes, it was sinking into the sea—and the shutters were wide open! The sun, too, was shining through. For years these old shutters had not let in a rift of light; but now they were aflood with it."

Those who do not hug the supernatural are at liberty to suppose that the strain of settling and sinking unbarred and flung open the shutters. Of Captain Morrill it may be noted that his presence of mind and bravery several years earlier had saved the lives of Mrs. Burnham and other passengers in a collision between the steamboat Sebascodegan and a revenue cutter. But for him *The Opened Shutters* would never have been written.

The beginning of this capital story was not with the Tide Mill, however, but with the name Thinkright Johnson. Like certain persons whose appearance before Mrs. Burnham's mind's eye has compelled her to write about them, this New Englandish appellation gave birth to a book. Thinkright Johnson—Thinkright Johnson; the name haunted Mrs. Burnham for days and weeks, "till I knew that the only way I could have any peace was to write something about him."

It was the same way with Jewel. She kept coming before her author. "She is the exact type of one of my little nieces, in character, looks, and even to the

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things that she says. In some way I felt compelled to write about her."

On the other hand the story of *The Right Princess* came to Mrs. Burnham one evening when she was all dressed for the theater. "As I stood in my room, all ready to go, it began to come to me. I drew off one of my gloves and sat down to my desk just to jot down a few of the ideas; but the whole thing grew so rapidly in my mind that I did not realize anything in the world about me again, till I found myself removing one of my shoes many hours later.

"The book was practically conceived and written in a single night. But, ordinarily, I just live with my characters after they have come to me. Of course it is usually the leading character of a story that occurs to me first, and then I let him or her gather about them the characters which they would naturally know or come in contact with. Then I just let them say the things which they would naturally say to each other. Of course I accept and reject what my characters shall say in print, coördinating and assorting it into the plot; but they develop the plot.

"My hours are from 9 to 12 in the morning. Whatever I write comes to me perfectly easily and naturally, and I rarely ever make any change in my first copy. My mother used to say that I wrote just as other people hemmed handkerchiefs. Writing has never meant any struggle whatever to me.

"Stories are to entertain, and they cannot do this if they are unhappy, and then, all my early stories I used to read to my father, and he particularly dis-

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liked anything that was unhappy in them and urged me to take it out."

Among Mrs. Burnham's close friends are the brothers George Barr McCutcheon, the novelist, and John McCutcheon, the cartoonist; and George Ade. Charles Klein, the playwright, was a personal friend also.

It is improper to use the word trilogy in speaking of Mrs. Burnham's Christian Science novels, since a trilogy, rightly speaking, is a group of three novels in which one or more characters persist, or which have a common setting. If we can speak of a trilogy based on an idea or set of ideas then Mrs. Burnham's Christian Science trilogy consists of *The Right Princess* (1902), *Jewel* (1903) and *The Leaven of Love* (1908). *The Opened Shutters* (1906) is free from the special terminology of the Scientists, though saturated with their principles and beliefs in the character of Thinkright Johnson and later of Sylvia Lacey.

Heart's Haven (1918) is Mrs. Burnham's account of May Ca'line, a village beauty who, as between two lovers, kept faith with the one to whom she had betrothed herself. Her son marries a girl of no breeding and is saved from disaster by his mother's rejected lover, whose story he does not know. May Ca'line herself is later the means of restoring her son's fortunes. There is a double love story very pleasantly told and very happily worked out.

Though with *The Leaven of Love* Mrs. Burnham has given over writing Christian Science novels the underlying ideas of her work, which were there before she wrote *The Right Princess,* which were there when

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she wrote *Dr. Latimer,* remain unaltered and always expressed. These ideas are those of peaceful and happy existences, of the validity of mental experiences, of the influence of intellectual environment. Thus as lately as 1916, in *Instead of the Thorn,* she gives us the story of a Chicago girl brought up in luxury, whose father is ruined in circumstances that seem to her to involve his business associate. The fact that this young man is in love with the girl sets up the complication, or struggle, necessary to make a novel. The girl is finally persuaded to go to New England for rest, and Mrs. Burnham directs the reader's attention less to the solution of certain external problems than to the way in which simple, quiet village life restores the heroine's mental poise and happiness. As for the proof that Mrs. Burnham's faith was antecedent to the first of her Christian Science novels what clearer evidence need be asked than Helen Ivison's characterization of Dr. Latimer in the story, *Dr. Latimer?*

"The secret of his influence over people is only that absolute trust in God which he has learned somehow in life's school. He puts self out of the way more than any one we ever knew, and so a power shines through him which is not of this world, and people, when they come near him, feel all that is morally best in them being drawn forward, and are conscious of crowding out of sight all that they would be ashamed to have come to his notice."

Nothing better illustrates the quality of Mrs. Burnham's humor—a humor that makes her stories palatable reading even where the reader disagrees vio-

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lently with the ideas set forth—than the chapters in *Jewel* where Jewel is suffering from what those about her agree to be fever and sore throat. Dr. Ballard has prepared medicine in a glass of water. Jewel is to take a couple of spoonfuls of the "water" to satisfy Mrs. Forbes. Instead she drinks heavily from an unmedicated pitcherful. By evening she is much better. Then does the doctor, who thinks he has tricked Jewel by persuading her to trick the housekeeper, learn that he has been fooled instead.

"'Didn't you drink any of the water?' asked Dr. Ballard at last.

"'Yes, out of the pitcher.'

"'Why not out of the glass?'

"'It didn't look enough. I was so thirsty.'

"Mr. Evringham finally found voice.

"'Jewel, why didn't you obey the doctor?' . . .

"Jewel thought a minute.

"'He said it wasn't medicine, so what was the use?' she asked.

"Mr. Evringham, seeming to find an answer to this difficult, bit the end of his mustache."

Equally amusing, equally good as humor, is Jewel's behavior with respect to the overshoes which she is ordered to wear. At first she wears them regardless. Then she is told to wear them only when it rains. A rainy day dawns. Grandfather Evringham comes downstairs in bad humor. "'Beastly weather.'" Jewel inquires:

"'But the flowers and trees want a drink, don't they?'

"''M. I suppose so.'

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" 'And the brook will be prettier than ever.'

" ' 'M. See that you keep out of it.'

" 'Yes, I will, grandpa; and I thought the first thing this morning, I'll wear my rubbers all day. I was so afraid I might forget I put them right on to make sure.' "

Recovering shortly Mr. Evringham observes:

" 'The house doesn't leak anywhere. I think it will be safe for you to take them off until after breakfast.' "

Now this is excellent humorous writing and Mrs. Burnham's novels are filled with it, even her Christian Science novels, perhaps those particularly; it is so good simply because she has most thoroughly assimilated her material before starting to write. How many writers more famous than she, more gifted, possibly, from a critical standpoint, would have made a sorry failure of such books as *Jewel* and *The Right Princess* we don't care to think. But you may see the disaster any day in the case of writers like Winston Churchill, engrossed by certain political and ethical ideals, and Ernest Poole, whose fine novel *The Harbor* failed of the highest rank simply because he had not assimilated the sociological ideas which he wished to present through his characters. It is continually happening, this effort of the good artist to handle material he has not mastered; and as surely as he essays the task he leaves his place as a novelist to mount the pulpit of the preacher, the rostrum of the reformer, the soapbox of the agitator—and a fine story is spoiled beyond all salvaging.

But when Mrs. Burnham writes of Christian

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Science beliefs, ideas and mental attitudes she is not writing primarily to lay those things before the reader. She is writing to tell a story. These are the elements of her story. From them she weaves her web of fancy but they are the colors and not the pattern.

In the depiction of character, notably the strongly accentuated characters of New England, Mrs. Burnham is unfailingly and admirably successful. *The Opened Shutters* lends itself from the start to the happy illustration of this faculty. Who more accurately observed and justly reported than Miss Lacey, Judge Trent and John Dunham? Miss Lacey meets the judge's housekeeper, old Hannah, and exclaims:

" 'I just met Judge Trent, Hannah. Dear me, can't you brush that hat of his a little? It looks for all the world like a black cat that has just caught sight of a mastiff.' "

Martha Lacey's attitude toward Judge Trent is summed up in the refrain continually sounding at the back of her head:

" 'If I'd married him, he' "—would have done so and so or wouldn't have done something else. No two ways about that! The consciousness of this stern and immutable fact is what makes Judge Trent's life one long sensation of relief at having been refused.

"The judge softly closed the door behind her. 'There, but for the grace of God,' he murmured devoutly, 'goes Mrs. Calvin Trent.' Then he returned to his desk, put on his hat, and sat down at his work."

Plots? There are hundreds of writers who can build twenty-story plots with express elevator service

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and private subway stations. There aren't so many who can see people clearly and see them whole and set them down brightly on paper. Mrs. Burnham's novels will be widely read and enjoyed for so long as she writes them and afterward for many a day.

Books by Clara Louise Burnham

The Quest Flower.
Flutterfly.
The Golden Dog.
No Gentlemen, 1882.
A Sane Lunatic, 1883.
Dearly Bought, 1884.
Next Door, 1885.
Young Maids and Old, 1886.
The Mistress of Beech Knoll, 1887.
Miss Bagg's Secretary, 1892.
Dr. Latimer, 1893.
Miss Archer Archer, 1894.
Sweet Clover, a Romance of the White City, 1894.
The Wise Woman, 1895.
A Great Love, 1898.
A West Point Wooing and Other Stories, 1899.
Miss Pritchard's Wedding Trip, 1901.
The Right Princess, 1902.
Jewel: a Chapter in Her Life, 1903.
Jewel's Story Book, 1904.
The Opened Shutters, 1906.
The Leaven of Love, 1908.
Clever Betsy, 1910.
The Inner Flame, 1912.

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The Right Track, 1914.
Instead of the Thorn, 1916.
Heart's Haven, 1918.

All of Mrs. Burnham's books are published by Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.

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CHAPTER XXIII

DEMETRA VAKA

IT is the commendable but not always fruitful practice of the publishing house of Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, to send to all its authors a folder calling for such particulars of their lives as may properly be matter of interest to the general public. In 1914 or thereabouts one of these fact requisitions went to the author Demetra Vaka, otherwise Mrs. Kenneth Brown. In due time it came back to Boston bearing the following data, inscribed in a feminine hand that no school-master could conscientiously praise:

Name in full: Demetra Kenneth Brown.

Chief occupation or profession: Wife.

Residence & address: Green Lane Cottage, Mount Kisco, New York.

Place of birth: Island of Bouyouk Ada, Sea of Marmora.

Date of birth: 1877.

Education, when and where received, in detail: First privately. Then at Athens Private School. Paris. Various convents. Courses at Sorbonne. One year University of Athens. One year University of New York. Various schools in Constantinople, too many to remember, using schools as frivolous women

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use garments—throwing away when not becoming.

Date of marriage: 1904, April 21.

Military, political and civic record: No records whatever except of bad temper.

Director or trustee of the following educational or public institutions: Never offered any, except the self-assumed one of bringing up my husband.

Politics: For the best man who is on the ticket.

Religious denomination: Orthodox Greek.

Professional associations, learned and technical societies, decorations, etc.: None.

Member of the following philanthropic or charitable institutions (if holder of any office, so state): Have not any money to spare.

Social clubs: Have not sufficient money except for golf and tennis clubs of wherever I happen to be, which if all counted will require more room than you allow me, as we roam all over the earth.

Business or professional record: On the editorial staff of Greek newspaper *Atlantis* for about six months in New York City. French teacher at the Comstock School, N. Y. C., for several years up to 1903. Writer since 1904.

Office or position occupied by you: Wife.

Title of (first) book: First Secretary.

Year first published: 1907.

Publisher: W. B. Dodge & Co. (extinct).

This amusing cross-examination needs to be supplemented at several points and the reader will be somewhat more enlightened by what follows.

Demetra Vaka is a Greek whose ancestors lived in

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Constantinople for more than 700 years. Many of them were Turkish government officials. Mrs. Brown's early life brought her constantly and intimately in touch, therefore, with the Turks. She played with Turkish children and was able to view the Turkish people without any religious prejudice whatever. But she was born, she says, with an American soul. Certain conditions revolted her, and not least among them the system of prearranged marriages. It was to escape such a marriage that she ran away from home, coming to the United States with the family of a relative. Once here, however, she was soon left to shift for herself.

Alone, penniless, and not yet eighteen, she found it neither an easy nor romantic affair to get work. When finally she got on the staff of *Atlantis* she found she liked newspaper work. But it came home to her that going on this way she would never learn English, and at that time she wanted English because she hoped to study medicine. So she became a private school teacher of French, and within two years she had charge of the French department of the school.

In 1901, six years after her arrival in America, she returned to Turkey. Carefully guarded in her pocket was a ticket back to America. She had no intention of staying in Constantinople. Once in that city invitations from girlhood friends began to reach her. These were now married women, and so, equipped with a new and American point of view, she entered Turkish harems as a welcome visitor from whom there need be no secrets. Eight years later ten studies of Turkish women, embodying what she

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saw and heard in 1901-2, were published as a book, *Haremlik,* which means "the place of the harem." But to stick to the order of events:

Demetra Vaka returned to America and the teaching of French but not for long. In 1904 she was married to Kenneth Brown, novelist, and had at last the continuous encouragement and professional assistance necessary if she was to become a writer in English. She had been frequently urged to prepare for publication her picturesque experiences. One day after her marriage she sent to a magazine editor an account of an experience while on a visit to Russia. It was accepted. That settled it. She would write.

Haremlik was her second book. It made a wide and deep impression. There have been French, Swedish, German, Italian, Danish and Dutch translations. It is not fiction, and neither, essentially, is Mrs. Brown's later book, *A Child of the Orient,* which is the tale of the author's own childhood and early life in Constantinople, of a Greek girl with Turkish friends and playmates. The flavor of the *Arabian Nights* fills the pages of *Haremlik* and *A Child of the Orient.* The final chapters of the second book give Demetra Vaka's first impressions of America, the effect upon a girl in her teens of a land almost as different from Paris as Paris had been from Constantinople and Athens.

Mrs. Brown's latest book is a war book but of a quite exceptional character. To understand its genesis you must remember that she is, though by her marriage an American citizen, a Greek by race. Her love for Greece, her hopes for its future, are pretty

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clearly disclosed in the opening chapter of *Haremlik*. And so when the European War had passed its first stages and the political situation in Greece had developed into a struggle between King Constantine and Venizelos, a struggle in which the King's attitude threatened national dishonor, Demetra Kenneth Brown resolved to go over to Greece, interview the leaders of both factions, and save Greece for the Allies—at least endeavor to see that Greece fulfilled her treaty obligations, such as those entered upon with Serbia.

Looking at the enterprise now Mrs. Brown is the first to concede its quixotism, its hopelessness, its ridiculousness from the start. And yet it proved immensely worth while in unsuspected ways. Going to London, the novelist succeeded in getting to Lloyd George; afterward she had access to other high personages in the Allied countries. Besides French she knows Italian. At Athens all doors were open to her. She interviewed not once but many times King Constantine himself and his generals. Afterward she went to Salonica and talked with Venizelos. When she had done she was able to write, purely as a reporter, *In the Heart of German Intrigue,* one of the notable exposés of the war. Out of the mouths of Constantine and his aides she convicted them. Her series of interlocking interviews built up a complete and fatal revelation of what Germany, with the connivance of Constantine's government, had planned to do.

Mrs. Brown's work as a reporter of royalties and others and even her autobiographical books such as *A Child of the Orient* and *Haremlik* are, strictly considered, outside the scope of this sketch, which has to

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do with her primarily as an American novelist and a woman. As a novelist she has several books to her credit besides her initial offering, *The First Secretary. The Duke's Price,* written with her husband; *Finella in Fairyland, In the Shadow of Islam,* and *The Grasp of the Sultan,* which was first published anonymously ("by?"), are all hers, as well as *The Heart of the Balkans.* Of all these *The Grasp of the Sultan,* which received serial publication and sold well even before the disclosure of the author's identity, is the most interesting and most deserving of detailed consideration in this place.

The novel was published in 1915 (as a book in June, 1916) and represents Demetra Vaka's skill after some ten years' apprenticeship at writing in English. A young Englishman, having wasted a fortune, drifts to Constantinople, and is appointed, through the agency of a countryman who has become a Turkish admiral, tutor to the imperial Ottoman princes. The youngest in his charge is 4-year-old Prince Bayazet, whose mother is a beautiful Greek girl of the harem. She has dared to defy the Sultan, who, failing in entreaty. strives to break her will by taking her son away from her. By a ruse of the head eunuch, she recovers the child and obtains the Sultan's pledge that they shall be unmolested for five years.

This is the background for a romance. The young English tutor falls in love with the Greek girl and plans to escape with her and the little Prince Bayazet.

The story is told with expertness, without indirection, with a fine control of suspense and with thrill

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after thrill. The finest thing about it is the constant discovery to the reader of the author's thorough knowledge of her people and her setting. Assuming that it could have been written by an American, it must have been preceded by weeks of study supplemented by foreign travel; whether a person not born and bred as Demetra Vaka was could have written it, even after extensive "documentation," seems doubtful. We should say the thing would be quite impossible were we not mindful of the late F. Marion Crawford, of whose ingenious and convincing tales Mrs. Brown's inevitably remind us. He, too, wrote one or more novels of Constantinople, with what historical accuracy we can't undertake to speculate. Possibly Mrs. Brown can pick a hundred holes in them respecting matters of fact! However, they had, for the American reader, an effect of perfect verisimilitude, and it is this effect precisely that Mrs. Brown's stories are enriched with. Only, in her case, we know that the likeness to truth is felt because the truth is there. She should do for us hereafter, if her restless spirit will permit, what Crawford did. Give us romances, Demetra Vaka, give us the East; stay with us, write for us novel after novel of the sort that used to come, one or two a year, from that villa at Sorrento where lived so long and wrought so faithfully the creator of Dr. Isaacs and the chronicler of the braveries of Prince Saracinesca!

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Books by Demetra Vaka

The First Secretary, 1907.
Haremlik, 1909.
The Duke's Price, 1910.
Finella in Fairyland, 1910.
In the Shadow of Islam, 1911.
A Child of the Orient, 1914.
The Grasp of the Sultan, 1916.
The Heart of the Balkans, 1917.
In the Heart of German Intrigue, 1918.

Demetra Vaka's books are published by Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.

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CHAPTER XXIV

EDNA FERBER

THE most interesting thing about Edna Ferber is that she was born in Kalamazoo. No, the most interesting thing is that she threw her first novel in the wastebasket whence, like Kipling's *Recessional,* it was retrieved by another. No, no! the most interesting thing about Edna Ferber is that she's a superb short story writer, one of the best in America, one of the dozen best.

You are all wrong. The supremely interesting fact about Edna Ferber is this: She invented the Tired Business Woman.

When writing about Miss Ferber why be dull? Why go in for the higher criticism? As for the lower criticism, we hope we are above it. Certainly *she* is.

To get back to name, dates, etc.: Chicago, Des Moines and Appleton, Wisconsin, all have a stake in Miss Ferber's success. Kalamazoo doesn't vociferate. It doesn't have to, for she was born there and though seven cities claimed Homer dead it will be no use for seven or eight or six places to claim Edna Ferber living. Kalamazoo will see to that; Kalamazoo, Michigan, where she made her début—the only début that's really worth making—on August 15, 1887. That is why we shall speak of her very re-

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spectfully. She is a month older than we are and a month is everything.

The daughter of Jacob Charles Ferber and Julia (Neuman) Ferber. Educated in the public and high schools of—alas for Kalamazoo!—Appleton, Wisconsin. At seventeen she became a reporter on the Appleton *Daily Crescent*—"the youngest real reporter in the world." She has it on us. We were almost nineteen when—but never mind. Appleton, we hear, soon became too small for Miss Ferber. Appletons have a way of doing that, or isn't it rather that the Edna Ferbers have a way of growing too big for the Appletons? Anyway, Miss Ferber went to Milwaukee and then to a big Chicago daily, the *Tribune,* to be exact. In Milwaukee she worked on the *Journal. Dawn O'Hara,* her first book, was written in the time she could spare from newspaper work. After it was completed she did not like it. It was her mother who rescued the manuscript from the wastebasket and sent it to a publisher, the same person mentioned in the dedication of the novel: "To my dear mother who frequently interrupts and to my sister Fannie who says 'Sh-sh-sh!' outside my door."

The best piece of work Mrs. Ferber ever did! The book took publisher and public by storm. It came out in 1911 and in the same year the new American author attained the dignity of twenty-four years. Our copy of *Dawn O'Hara* is marked "eighth edition," but as it is a reprinted copy that may understate, or rather under-indicate, the book's success. A few thousands one way or another hardly matters among so many thousands of copies sold!

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Without pressing the autobiographical idea too hard it is perfectly evident that much of the background of *Dawn O'Hara* is from Miss Ferber's own experience, notably the settings in Milwaukee. How she could ever have been so dissatisfied with her story as to discard it utterly any present-day reader will be puzzled to imagine. It is extremely well told. It is full of the perfect human—humorously human—quality which lifts so many of Miss Ferber's short stories into high place. Take this passage:

"The Whalens live just around the corner. The Whalens are omniscient. They have a system of news gathering which would make the efforts of a New York daily appear antiquated. They know that Jenny Laffin feeds the family on soup meat and oatmeal when Mr. Laffin is on the road; they know that Mrs. Pearson only shakes out her rugs once in four weeks; they can tell you the number of times a week that Sam Dempster comes home drunk; they know that the Merkles never have cream with their coffee because little Lizzie Merkle goes to the creamery every day with just one pail and three cents; they gloat over the knowledge that Professor Grimes, who is a married man, is sweet on Gertie Ashe, who teaches second reader in his school; they can tell you where Mrs. Black got her seal coat, and her husband only earning two thousand a year; they know who is going to run for mayor, and how long poor Angela Sims has to live, and what Guy Donnelly said to Min when he asked her to marry him.

"The three Whalens—mother and daughters—hunt in a group. They send meaning glances to one an-

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other across the room, and at parties they get together and exchange bulletins in a corner. On passing the Whalen house one is uncomfortably aware of shadowy forms lurking in the windows, and of parlor curtains that are agitated for no apparent cause."

Beautiful! Gardiner of Harvard could have turned it inside out for you and have shown you just where Miss Ferber impinged on your sensations and how and to what end. . . . But the thing shows the facility of her best work. Are the Whalens important to the story of *Dawn O'Hara?* They are not. They are merely figures on the canvas, amusing but unimportant people, no more than "brushed in" but brushed in with a firmness of touch, a fidelity of detail, a humorous artist eye that is, as we say, "taking" or "fetching" and wholly delightful.

Since 1911 with short stories and a book a year there is nothing to chronicle but a progressive and uninterrupted success. Nothing except the Tired Business Woman. Make no mistake; this creation of Miss Ferber's is *not* a feminine counterpart of the Tired Business Man. The T. B. W. does not go to musical shows and sit in the front rows. She does not telephone home to the husband that she is sorry but important business will detain her downtown this evening. She does not bring home old friends unexpectedly to dinner, or worse, *not* bring them home to dinner. She is man-less but not because she need be. She is unmarried or a widow. She has a boy, like Jock McChesney, and finds the task of making a man of him, in outside hours not devoted to earning their living, a woman-sized job! Give Edna Ferber credit

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for this, that she has done as much as the cleverest feminist to make the world see the self-reliant woman as she is, and not as the world deduces she may be. A woman, yes, and a mother, yes! But a regular person above everything else. Read, or re-read, *Emma McChesney & Co.* with this in a corner of your mind and you will be thankful to Miss Ferber when you have finished. Some thanks, too, may go to Ethel Barrymore, whose impersonation of the Tired But Admired (and admirable) Business Woman of Miss Ferber's fiction reënforced the lesson of the book with the ocular demonstration of the play.

Miss Ferber is going forward. The evidence of it will be found in the stories contained in her latest book, *Cheerful—By Request* (1918) and perhaps particularly in the story in that volume called *The Gay Old Dog.* At thirty-one she has her best years—as literary records go—before her. No painstaking appraisal of her work would be wise at this time. In the next two or three years she may overshadow everything she has done so far. We hope so. Because then, bearing in mind that month's initial difference, we shall have high hopes ourselves!

BOOKS BY EDNA FERBER

Dawn O'Hara, 1911.
Buttered Side Down, 1912.
Roast Beef Medium, 1913.
Personality Plus, 1914.
Emma McChesney & Co., 1915.

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Fanny Herself, 1917.
Cheerful—By Request, 1918.

Published by Frederick A. Stokes Company, New York, except Cheerful—By Request, which is published by Doubleday, Page & Company, New York.

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CHAPTER XXV

DOROTHY CANFIELD FISHER

MRS. FISHER is, we think, the only novelist of whose work we shall say nothing. Why? Because it "speaks for itself"? Certainly not. Every one's work does that. No, because it does not speak sufficiently for her.

You are asked here and now to think of her not as a novelist but as a woman. For as a novelist we could say of her only the obvious fact, that she is a top-notcher judged by any and every standard. The woman who could write *The Squirrel-Cage* does not need any critical tests applied to determine the worth and genuineness of her work, nor the sincerity of it. What she does need, or rather, what her readers and all readers need, is a reminder of her rôle as teacher, helper, friend. She is one of those fine people whose work makes the plain word "service" a shining and symbolic thing. "Service" is no longer a word but a ritual and a liturgy.

We shall give an outline of her life but as the friend who prepared it for us says in a letter enclosing it: "It does not do justice to her very useful war work." This letter further says, with simple truth:

"She has been one who has not broken down under the strain but has gone on doing a prodigious amount

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of work. First running, almost entirely alone, the work for soldiers blinded in battle, editing a magazine for them, running the presses, often with her own hands, getting books written for them; all the time looking out for refugees and personal cases that came under her attention; caring for children from the evacuated portions of France, organizing work for them; then she dropped all that and ran the camp on the edge of the war zone where her husband was stationed to train the young ambulance workers; and while there she started any number of important things—reading rooms, etc. Then she went back to her work in Paris. Just now she is at the base of the Pyrenees, organizing a Red Cross hospital for children from the evacuated portions.

"All this is reflected, or I should say the result of her experiences is reflected in her *Home Fires in France,* just published this fall. It is just what the title says, and I don't know anything that has been written anything like it. There isn't any bursting shrapnel in it, no heroics or medals of honor; it is merely full of the French women and some Americans who have done the steady, quiet work of holding life together until the war should be over. Steadily they try to reconstruct what the Germans have destroyed. . . . It is the best thing she has done."

It and the deeds back of it. When you read *Home Fires in France* you will understand why one man who read proof on it exclaimed:

"If every one knew this book as I know it there would be no doubt of it selling 100,000 copies at once."

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With *The Squirrel-Cage,* published in 1912, Mrs. Fisher became a novelist. It was followed by two books on child training, *A Montessori Mother* (1913) and *Mothers and Children* (1914), and then the teacher resumed the rôle of storyteller with *The Bent Twig.* Before *The Squirrel-Cage* Mrs. Fisher was merely the author of a few textbooks. After it she was an important figure in American fiction.

Dorothy Canfield Fisher is thirty-eight years old, a bachelor of philosophy and a doctor of philosophy, mistress of six languages, author of twelve books, mother of two children. She and her husband, John Redwood Fisher, captain of a Columbia football team, himself a critic and writer, divided their time before the war between a farm near a little Vermont village and occasional excursions to New York, Rome or some other metropolis. In 1915, Mr. Fisher joined the ambulance service and went to France. Mrs. Fisher was at work on *Understood Betsy,* but as soon as that was finished she followed her husband to Paris with her children. Since then she has been absorbed in war relief work which has ranged from running an establishment that prints books for soldiers blinded in battle to managing five peasant women cooks and buying supplies for a large training camp for ambulance drivers. Mr. Fisher is now a first lieutenant in the United States Army in France.

Mrs. Fisher was born in Lawrence, Kansas, where her father was president of the University of Kansas. As a high school girl in Lawrence she made friends with an army officer on the staff of a nearby war college. He taught her to ride horseback and introduced

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her to his hobby, higher mathematics. This friendship has lately been resumed in France. The young army officer is now General John J. Pershing.

Dorothea Frances Canfield, or Dorothy Canfield, became an undergraduate in Ohio State University, of which her father (James Hulme Canfield) was president at that time. Her degree of bachelor of philosophy came from Ohio State University. When Mr. Canfield moved to New York to be librarian at Columbia University his daughter took up postgraduate work there, specializing in the Romance languages, and won her degree of doctor of philosophy. For three years, from 1902 to 1905, she was secretary of the Horace Mann School. Her associates all her life have been cosmopolitan in the proper sense of that word. Her mother, Flavia (Camp) Canfield, is an artist of some attainment and with her Dorothy Canfield spent a good deal of her life abroad. The result—one result—was friends of all nationalities living pretty much all over the world. Mrs. Fisher is consequently a person of broad sympathies, but the predominant quality in her seems to be a clear-headed, hearty New England Americanism. At one time or another she has picked up a good knowledge of French, German, Italian, Spanish and Danish. French she acquired as a child tumbling about in the Paris studio of her mother. Now her children are learning their French in Paris.

After their marriage in 1907, Mr. and Mrs. Fisher left New York and went hunting for a working and living place far away from the city. On the side of one of the Green Mountains, near the little village

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of Arlington, Vermont, they found a fair approximation of what they were after. The old house already on the farm they made over to suit their needs and wishes. A spring branch on the mountain side was boxed up and the water piped down to the house. An electric lighting plant was installed. A study entirely separate from the house was built. Mr. and Mrs. Fisher make no effort to have the farm cultivated. That is, they didn't in the good—or bad—old days before the war. They were on it to live and work, but not to bury themselves in agricultural details. The nearest approach to tilling the soil was the garden, the re-foresting of the mountain side with baby pine trees, and the rejuvenation of an ancient saw mill to work up the scrub timber.

Arlington is "in no sense a literary rural community." The village has only a few hundred people in it, is two miles away from the Fisher farm, and its post-office has few manuscripts to handle either way. In 1911-12, for variety, Mr. and Mrs. Fisher went to Rome for the winter. It was there that she made the acquaintance of Madame Montessori. An American publisher was having trouble with the translation of Madame Montessori's book about her pedagogical system. Knowing that Mrs. Fisher was an excellent Italian scholar and that she was already on the ground, the publisher arranged for her assistance with the translation. Almost every day of that winter Mrs. Fisher was at the Casa di Bambini (Children's House) looking after the translation and helping to entertain and to explain the Montessori system to commissions sent from England, France and other

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European countries. The direct result of that winter was Mrs. Fisher's *A Montessori Mother,* a simplification and adaptation, in her delightfully easy and half-humorous style, of the Italian system to the needs of American mothers. Besides being published in the United States, Canada, England and India this book has been translated into five foreign languages.

Mothers and Children appeared the next year and four stories—*The Bent Twig, Hillsboro People, The Real Motive* and *Understood Betsy*—preceded *Home Fires in France. Understood Betsy* was promptly translated into French, as was *Hillsboro People,* a collection of New England short stories which sold in the tens of thousands here and abroad. Mrs. Fisher is a frequent contributor to French periodicals as well as to the principal American magazines.

BOOKS BY DOROTHY CANFIELD FISHER

Corneille and Racine in England, 1904.
English Rhetoric and Composition (with Professor G. R. Carpenter), 1906.
What Shall We Do Now? 1906.
Gunhild, 1907.
The Squirrel-Cage, 1912.
A Montessori Mother, 1913.
Mothers and Children, 1914.
The Bent Twig, 1915.
Hillsboro People, 1916.
The Real Motive, 1917.
Understood Betsy, 1917.
Home Fires in France, 1918.

Published by Henry Holt & Company, New York.

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CHAPTER XXVI

AMELIA E. BARR

ON March 17, 1918, the author of this book had the pleasure, as editor of *Books and the Book World* of *The Sun,* New York, of printing what is certainly the best account extant of Amelia E. Barr within a reasonable length. Although the article was unsigned it was the work of Mr. A. Elwood Corning, who had been a neighbor of Mrs. Barr at Richmond Hill, Long Island, New York. It was based upon a personal visit and interview. This chapter is really nothing more than a reprint of Mr. Corning's article with one or two slight changes to include the six months which have elapsed since its appearance and prior to the appearance of this book. To Mr. Corning, then, the credit of this chapter.

Amelia E. Barr struck the popular taste more than thirty years ago with her *Bow of Orange Ribbon.* She is one of the most prolific of present-day writers of fiction. Her latest novel, *The Paper Cap,* published in the fall of 1918, brings the number of her books up to over seventy, and this does not include hundreds of short stories, a poem a week for *fourteen years,* written for Bonner's *Ledger,* or the numerous newspaper articles, essays and verses of the first fourteen years of her literary life.

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On March 29, 1918, Mrs. Barr entered her eighty-eighth year. In the preceding twelve months she had published three books, and shortly before her eighty-seventh birthday (or the birthday which made her eighty-seven years old!) she completed a fourth in manuscript! This was *The Paper Cap,* the scenes of which are laid in Yorkshire, England, where the novelist spent a part of her childhood. Mrs. Barr thinks it one of the best stories she has written. The paper cap of the title is that of the workingman and the story centers around his fight for the suffrage. It was really a contest between the hand loom and the power loom.

It was about 4 in the afternoon when Mr. Corning reached Mrs. Barr's study on the visit which preceded the preparation of his article. Mrs. Barr had been writing since 7 that morning, with only a brief intermission for luncheon, and was not feeling, she declared, so well as usual. "This is one of mamma's blue Mondays," said her daughter. But after she had begun to discuss current events, some incidents of her early life in Texas and above all the war Mrs. Barr became animated. She is an interesting and enthusiastic talker with positive views, a power of unusually apt expression and a mind keenly alert. Convinced of a fact, she utters it with passionate force.

On this particular afternoon the manuscript of *The Paper Cap* was lying on her writing table. "It will be done to-morrow," she said with the spirit of one who looks upon the completion of a work which has required much thought and painstaking labor. She pushed the manuscript toward Mr. Corning; it was

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as free of corrections and interpolations as if it had been freshly copied from a former draft. Mrs. Barr seldom changes what she first writes and always uses sheets of yellow paper, finding this tint more restful to her eyes than white.

When weary of building stories she hands the manuscript over to a stenographer to be typewritten. Mrs. Barr writes with a lead pencil. Going to a drawer she brought out a box full of old pencil stubs, some of which dated back to the days when she was writing *The Bow of Orange Ribbon.* A few years ago six or seven of these stubs were given to as many friends, who had them tipped with gold and made into shawl pins.

In personal appearance and dress Mrs. Barr is typically English. She has a large face and marvelous physique, is rapid of movement and lithe of step. A flowing gown of some delicate shade is usually worn loosely over a lace petticoat, and a beribboned cap of lace and rosebuds or sometimes cowslips rests becomingly on her silvery hair.

But the most striking characteristic of this remarkable woman is the retention of so much youthful vigor and optimism, which she attributes to her English ancestry. Born at Ulverton, Lancashire, England, March 29, 1831, Amelia Barr is descended from a long line of Saxon forebears, of whom the men for generations had been either seamen or preachers of the Gospel. Her father, the Rev. Dr. William Henry Huddleston, was a scholar and a preacher of eloquence. The child's early education was largely under his supervision. As he was a regular contributor to

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English reviews, the little daughter was brought up in a literary environment.

Before she was six she is said to have known intimately the tales of the *Arabian Nights,* and nothing pleased her more in those days than to be the recipient of a new book, a pleasure seldom afforded her. She would often accompany her father on his preaching itineraries through the fishing villages and thus became a lover of the sea, from which she doubtless formed impressions which have disclosed themselves in her fiction.

At eighteen she was sent to a Free Kirk seminary in Glasgow, where she remained until her marriage to Robert Barr in July, 1850. For three years the young couple lived in Scotland. Here Mrs. Barr made the acquaintance of Henry Ward Beecher, who years later was able to help her begin her career as a writer.

Failure in business compelled the Barrs to come to America. They first came to New York, where the future novelist saw for the first time to her great delight ready-made dresses and oranges, a fruit not easily procurable in the north of England or Scotland.

The Barrs with their two little daughters soon went West, locating in Chicago. After a time misfortune drove them South. They went first to Austin, later to Galveston, Texas. The history of these eventful and sorrowful years is told in Mrs. Barr's autobiography, *The Red Leaves of a Human Heart.*

In Austin success was sandwiched in with failure, disappointments and heartaches. In those early days on the frontier there was a great scarcity of many things which went to make up home life. When Mrs.

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Barr came to America she had been told that she was going into a desolate and savage country in which there were none of the comforts of life and where none could be obtained. So she brought with her a great assortment of useful articles, such as needles, tape, sewing cotton (linens, silks, etc.). Finding that they had more than they wanted of such things, the Barrs traded some of them for tea and other staple articles of food.

Despite vicissitudes Mrs. Barr never neglected her reading or the daily instruction of her children. The noon hour was reserved for study and at that time no one was permitted to disturb her. She could be seen daily sitting with a young baby on her lap by the open door of her log house partaking of the noonday meal and reading at the same time. In all, Mrs. Barr had fifteen children. Three daughters are now living, one the wife of Kirk Munro, the popular writer for boys.

In spite of her large family Mrs. Barr found time to accomplish things outside household duties. During the Civil War, for example, articles of amusement were few. One was put to great inconvenience in securing games. So Mrs. Barr, an enthusiastic whist player, painted a pack of cards, which were to those who remember them a most real counterpart of an original set.

At the close of the war the Barrs moved to Galveston, and there, in 1867, Mrs. Barr experienced the overwhelming sorrow of her life. Yellow fever entered her home. The whole family was stricken, and before Mrs. Barr herself had fully recovered she suffered the loss of her husband and three little sons.

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After endeavoring to support herself and three daughters in the South she came with them to New York in the fall of 1869.

One day she was asked if she could write stories and replied that she had often written them for the amusement of her children but had destroyed them after they had served their purpose. She promised to try again and received $30 for the effort.

"What, $30 for that article?" she exclaimed. "Why, I can write three or four of them a week."

She eventually found work on the *Christian Union,* of which Beecher was editor, and this opened a career which has brought her a reputation and honor. At first she rented a few rooms at 27 Amity Street, Brooklyn, a house once occupied by Edgar Allan Poe, although at the time she was unconscious of the fact. When she moved into these quarters she says that after paying the rent she had only $5 in her purse.

"Well, girls," she told her daughters, "we will have a good beefsteak dinner and let to-morrow take care of itself." Even then she felt, as she afterward said, that "God and Amelia Barr were a multitude."

For fourteen years Mrs. Barr toiled, meeting with successes and rebuffs. It was a hard struggle. After working all day in the Astor Library she would often at night take her daughters to the theater, leaving sometimes in her purse only enough money for car-fare in the morning.

Returning from one of these outings she discovered that her house had been broken into. Rushing at once to the family Bible, she found $40 between the pages where she had placed it for safety. Not having in

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those days enough money to bank, she would often put bills behind pictures, and they were never disturbed.

In 1884 *Jan Vedder's Wife* was published. The success of this book almost immediately placed Mrs. Barr in the front rank of popular American novelists. From that time her record has been phenomenal. Over fifty-three when her first book appeared, Mrs. Barr has produced an average of over two novels a year and she does not possess one unsold manuscript. She has written only one article, she has said, which she was never able to dispose of. And so little does she care for her books after they have been written that to-day she has not a complete set of them in her library, which numbers several thousand volumes.

She not infrequently takes up one of her old novels and after reading it says that it seems like a new story. "All my characters," she once remarked, "are real to me. They begin to live and have a personality of their own. I have started to write a villain and afterward fallen in love with him and made him my hero."

Mrs. Barr's books are invariably sold outright. Years ago she made a thorough study of the early history of Manhattan Island, which ultimately formed a foundation on which she built eight historical novels which stand out as among the best of her work. Chronologically considered they should be read as follows:

The House on Cherry Street.
The Strawberry Handkerchief.
The Bow of Orange Ribbon.

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A Maid of Old New York.
A Song of a Single Note.
The Maid of Maiden Lane.
Trinity Bells.
The Belle of Bowling Green.

So much Mr. Corning. The author of this book can add nothing to so extraordinary a story. As fiction, Mrs. Barr's own life and performance would be called incredible. Her stories are first-rate stories; all of them offer clean, imaginative and very real entertainment; many of them offer a true and valuable picture of vanished or vanishing times, manners and people. Her achievement is much bigger and more solid and worth while than many, many efforts at literary "art." May she live to be a hundred and to have written a hundred books!

BOOKS BY AMELIA E. BARR

Jan Vedder's Wife.
A Border Shepherdess.
Feet of Clay.
Bernicia.
Remember the Alamo.
She Loved a Sailor.
The Lone House.
A Sister of Esau.
Prisoners of Conscience.
The Tioni Whelp.
The Black Shilling.
The Bow of Orange Ribbon.

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A Maid of Old New York.
A Song of a Single Note.
The Maid of Maiden Lane.
Trinity Bells.
The Belle of Bowling Green.
The Red Leaves of a Human Heart.
The Strawberry Handkerchief, 1908.
The Hands of Compulsion, 1909.
The House on Cherry Street, 1909.
An Orkney Maid, 1918.
The Paper Cap, 1918.
(About 50 other books.)

Mrs. Barr's novels are published by D. Appleton & Company, New York. Some may be had in reprint, others are out of print.

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CHAPTER XXVII

ALICE HEGAN RICE

THE author of *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch* was born in 1870 in a big old country house at Shelbyville, Kentucky, the home of her grandfather, Judge Caldwell. Her name was, indeed, Alice Caldwell Hegan as a girl. It was Alice Hegan when she wrote the very small book which is quite as world famous as *Mr. Dooley,* Mrs. Wiggs's pleasant contemporary. It became Alice Hegan Rice on December 18, 1902, when the daughter of Samuel W. Hegan and Sallie P. Hegan was married to the poet Cale Young Rice. And they have lived happily ever after. They have traveled the world over together. They rest, between whiles, at a big, columned house in Louisville, Kentucky. There are photographs extant showing them in pleasant idleness on the broad verandas. Mr. Rice writes songs inspired by their travels together which make such books as *Wraiths and Realities* and songs inspired by their mere happy proximity, making a book such as *Poems to A. H. R.,* both published in 1918. Mrs. Rice no longer writes the fortunes of Mrs. Wiggs in disused pages of an old business ledger (for that is how the first draft of *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch* was made). But she writes as agreeably as ever. Mostly

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shorter pieces. She is not really a novelist but a short story writer. Even *Mrs. Wiggs* was but a long short story.

Hegans have lived in Louisville pretty close to a century—ninety years anyway. Alice Hegan's girlhood was sheltered by a brick house on Fourth Street. Summers she spent at Judge Caldwell's house, her birthplace, with a negro nurse and "Aunt Susan" to tell her folk tales, mostly about personable animals, Brer Fox, Brer Rabbit and the rest of the common acquaintance of Southern childhood. Dolls, church, Sunday School, day school at "Miss Hampton's" in a house once the home of George Keats, brother of the poet; dancing school ("in ruffles and in gorgeous, wide, blue sashes, pink being prohibited as highly unbecoming"); dances at Galt House; "parties," country dances in Shelbyville—these were the tissue of those youthful days.

School days over, Alice Hegan wanted to go to Paris and study art. There was reason to think that she had a talent, which would justify an expenditure of time and money. She abandoned the idea because, as she says, "I was an only daughter. My father and mother needed me. It wouldn't have been right for me to go."

She had, meanwhile, been writing; she had always been writing a little. When she was sixteen the Louisville *Courier-Journal* had published *The Reveries of a Spinster,* an anonymous companion-piece to *The Reveries of a Bachelor.* The spinster's reveries brought many letters to the newspaper, letters read with due appreciation by Alice Hegan, author of spin-

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ster and reveries both. She had also written a few short stories and had been a contributor to humorous papers.

There was nothing surprising or wholly unpremeditated therefore in the writing of *Mrs. Wiggs.* Alice Hegan and her mother kept a "give-away bag" which went regularly to a "poor but merry and philosophic woman" living in a neglected quarter of Louisville, out near the railroad tracks, in the southern part of the city. This woman was the original of Mrs. Wiggs. "The story was not a 'just-so story,'" says Margaret Steele Anderson in her over-effusive appreciation of Alice Hegan Rice, "nor was it a photograph, exact from head to toe, but, in truth, a development of the original. The merry woman served as a nucleus; the rest was all Alice Hegan." To quote further:

"The manuscript was read one rainy Saturday morning to a little group of ardent young women which called itself, with a courage half gay and half ironical, the Authors' Club of Louisville. At that time it boasted no 'real author,' but the following was the roster of the club: Evelyn Snead Barnett, Alice Hegan Rice, Ellen Churchill Semple, George Madden Martin, Annie Fellows Johnston, Frances Caldwell Macaulay, Abbie Meguire Roach, Eva A. Madden, Mary Finley Leonard, Venita Seibert White, Margaret van der Cook and Margaret Anderson. This club meant nothing at the time, but it means, now, such stories as *Mrs. Wiggs* and *Mr. Opp, Emmy Lou, The Lady of the Decoration* and the *Little Colonel* books. It means also such work as Mrs. Roach's

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studies of married life—which rendered a year of *Harper's* very memorable—and such achievement in anthropo-geography as has made Ellen Semple a name on two continents and a lecturer at Oxford and Cambridge. To this little club was read this little story—and the club, as a body, became the very figure of laughter, literally holding both its sides.

"The story was published by the Century Company in October, 1901, and that next summer, as somebody put it, every tourist had it, 'sticking up out of his pocket.' "

There are thousands of stories to illustrate the world conquest of *Mrs. Wiggs.* West Virginia coal miners whose little homes contain no Bible have the book. In a village of Korea there is, or used to be, an old woman, bent continually over her garden, known to the English officers as "Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch." In Sidmouth, on the coast of South Devon, England, was another such person. Mr. and Mrs. Rice have had Mrs. Wiggses pointed out to them everywhere—and they have been everywhere—Sicily, China, India, Japan (the poet is a specialist in Orientalism). "In India one Christmas day, after a morning on the Ganges, after hours of Vedic hymns chanted by Brahmin priests and after a terrible vision of the bodies on the burning ghats," says Margaret Anderson, "Mrs. Rice was suddenly jerked back into modern life by a billboard near Benares. *Mrs. Wiggs* would be played there that night by an English company!"

Mrs. Rice is a good deal interested in philanthropic work at home. The Rices' house stands in St. James

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Court, a place of trees, bushes, wide sweeps of lawn and a playing fountain. The author of *Mrs. Wiggs* devotes time and personal effort to the Cabbage Patch Settlement and to a woman's club which is a feature of it. For many years Mrs. Rice was chiefly active in work among boys. At sixteen she founded a club for youngsters which held weekly meetings at her own home.

When writing she works generally in a snug room or den on the second floor of her home, working through the quiet mornings. She contrives somehow to deal with a heavy correspondence and replies with delightful letters to the letters of all kinds—curious, friendly, grateful—that she is constantly receiving.

"Though *Mrs. Wiggs* has made its author famous," says Margaret Anderson, "*Mr. Opp* is Mrs. Rice's finest piece of work. In the hero of this story, which is a story of Dickensian humor and robustness, we mark a real and very big development—a development, moreover, which is not a thing of violence but proceeds along the lines of the man's peculiar nature.

"Mrs. Wiggs is fixed, the same at the end of the book as at the opening; but Mr. Opp grows, and the interest of the reader increases with his growth. The story has not been read as *Mrs. Wiggs* was read, but for imagination, for spirituality, and even for humor. it remains the better book.

"It is, indeed, her most distinct success, for *Lovey Mary* followed *Mrs. Wiggs* in general character, while *Sandy,* though wholesome, engaging, and charged to the full with Mrs. Rice's humor, is not of an equal inspiration. Her story of *Billy-Goat Hill* shows some

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excellent and delicate work, the figures of 'Miss Lady' and the Doctor recalling those of Annie and her husband in *David Copperfield,* while Connie and Noah Wicker are done with delightful vim and gayety.

"In *The Honorable Percival* Mrs. Rice has aimed deliberately at the light, the frothy, the effect of touch-and-go, yet here we note especially an increase in her art. The thing is light and sure; it is froth but froth well-made and inviting; it does touch and go, but it touches with a spark and goes vividly.

"It is needless, however, to criticise her stories individually. What we must note of her work is this: It meets the great human need of cheer, it satisfies a great human desire with its wholesome milk of kindness. To make many nations laugh and laugh innocently; to bring entertainment to the sickbed and army trench and throne room and schoolroom; and to the million common houses of a million common people —this is the mission of her books and this their finest achievement."

Wise and honest words, these, of Margaret Steele Anderson's. What she has said so well we shall not attempt to better. We shall agree whole-heartedly with her that the best praise was given Alice Hegan Rice "by a very wise old man, who spoke for a great host of readers when he said:

" 'Madam, I salute you! You have done the world a service. You have cheered us, you have made us laugh happily and with courage.' "

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Books by Alice Hegan Rice

Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch, 1901.
Lovey Mary, 1903.
Sandy, 1905.
Captain June, 1907.
Mr. Opp, 1909.
A Romance of Billy-Goat Hill, 1912.
The Honorable Percival.
Calvary Alley, 1917.
Miss Mink's Soldier and Other Stories, 1918.

Published by the Century Company, New York.

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CHAPTER XXVIII

ALICE DUER MILLER

IF Alice Duer Miller would only express herself with a lofty obscurity she would be a Distinguished Author and if she would only write about a different kind of people she would be a really popular novelist. Not that she isn't popular, but that she might be ten times more so; and not that her work lacks distinction, but it lacks the peculiar kind of distinction which our high critical minds rave about.

She can go deeply—and deftly—into the minds of her people and bring out with a beautiful lucidity and no little humor what she finds there. But this satisfies neither camp. With those who are dissatisfied because Mrs. Miller does not write "artistically" (that is, unintelligibly) about the thoughts and emotions of her characters—with those we have no patience. But the others, the readers who think this excellent writer wasting her time on a worthless lot of subjects, for these we feel a good deal of sympathy.

Ladies Must Live is full of clever conversation; so is *The Happiest Time of Their Lives.* Clever conversation never sold 10,000 copies of a book nor had the slightest effect on a single life except the deplorable effect of temporarily causing unequipped readers to simulate a cleverness beyond their powers. More-

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over, the young reader of such books as these is pretty likely to think the people in them half-admirable because they say adroit things—or say things adroitly. This makes the young reader more difficult to deal with than ever. Mrs. Miller, or some one for her, will be retorting that she cannot take too-impressionable young minds into account in constructing a story. To which only a single answer is possible and it is this: Everybody else in the world has to take the young into account; why should not a writer do so?

Mrs. Miller's books, then, should be read by no one under thirty. And this not because the reading of them will actually harm a younger person, but because it may make him or her insufferable company for the immediate future. It is quite impossible to think of Mrs. Miller's ingenious tales of persons in "society" as harming anybody; they are too low voltage for that. And indeed in *The Happiest Time of Their Lives* we meet pleasant and positive, or "plus" persons, such as Pete Wayne and his mother, the contemplation of whom would be safe for the most immature sixteen-year-old. But it would be very, very unsafe to set before some young women the splendidly delineated Mrs. Vincent Farron of that same book! Just because her husband knew perfectly how to deal with her, how to break her, it does not follow that thousands of decent, affectionate, kind (and rather muddle-headed) young men can fill successfully the rôle of tigress tamers!

Yes, the great defect of Mrs. Miller's stories is that we seldom care to know the people in them, the Mrs. Farrons, the Nancy Almars, nor even the Christine

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Fenimers and the innocent but tiresomely insipid Mathilde Severances. We will occasionally consent to meet them and watch them perform (better company being lacking at the moment) for one main reason and only one: the skill with which they are brought before us and there put through their tricks. And if our very figure of speech seems to have in it something derogatory, to imply that these persons are not much better than puppets, the implication is not without an honest significance. Moving among artificialities, surrounded by polite and transparent deceptions, it would be too much not to expect these "society" folk to partake of their environment. They are wholly mechanistic, to go to metaphysics for a suitable term; they are precious puppets and nothing more; thanks to Mrs. Miller's skill the strings which control them are mostly invisible, but the jerky motion of them gives the secret away.

Having been as honest about this as we know how to be, let us turn to the first pages of *Ladies Must Live* and cull a few samples of Mrs. Miller's writing, samples which will convey to those who have not read her some idea of her gift of epigram and facile and beautiful characterization:

"Mrs. Ussher . . . turned toward hidden social availability very much as the douser's hazel wand turns toward the hidden spring. . . . She was unaware of her own powers, and really supposed that her sudden and usually ephemeral friendships were based on mutual attraction. . . . During the short period of their existence, Mrs. Ussher gave to these friendships the utmost loyalty and devotion. She

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agonized over the financial, domestic and romantic troubles of her friends; she sat up till the small hours, talking to them like a schoolgirl; during the height of their careers she organized plots for their assistance; and even when their stars were plainly on the decline, she would often ask them to lunch, if she happened to be alone.

"Many people, we know, are prone to make friends with the rich and great. Mrs. Ussher's genius consisted in having made friends with them before they were either."

Nancy Almar's husband says to her:

"'I hope you'll explain to them why I could not come.'

"'You mean that I would not have gone if you had?'

"'No,' he said, 'that I'm called South on business.'

"'I shan't tell them that, but I'll tell them you say so, if you like.'"

She was as good as her word—she usually was.

"'Would any one like to hear Roland's explanation of why he is not with us?'

"'Had it anything to do with his not being asked?' said a pale young man; and as soon as he had spoken he glanced hastily round the circle to ascertain how his remark had succeeded.

"So far as Mrs. Almar was concerned it had not succeeded at all, in fact, though he did not know it, nothing he said would ever succeed with her again, although a week before she had hung upon his every word. He had been a new discovery, something unknown and Bohemian, but alas, a day or two before,

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she had observed that underlying his socialistic theories was an aching desire for social recognition. He liked to tell his bejeweled hostesses about his friends the car-drivers; but, oh, twenty times more, he would have liked to tell the car-drivers about his friends the bejeweled hostesses. For this reason Mrs. Almar despised him, and where she despised she made no secret of the fact.

" 'Not asked, Mr. Wickham!' she said. 'I assume my husband is asked wherever I am,' and then turning to Laura Ussher she added with a faint smile: 'One's husband is always asked, isn't he?'

" 'Certainly, as long as you never allow him to come,' said another speaker."

Even from so slight an excerpt we think it will be plain that in the art of characterization and in the business of writing dialogue Mrs. Miller has nothing to learn. She is really one of the most hopeful prospects in American literature to-day and the great hope for her and for readers lies in the possibility—almost a probability—that she will abandon the very restricted and unimportant milieu of her recent novels for better fields. It is simple honesty to recognize that *The Happiest Time of Their Lives* holds out a great promise that she will do this. Such persons as Pete Wayne and his mother, and even the rather pathetic grandfather Mr. Lanley (of the New York Lanleys) are "real," that is, members of the human community and not sickening products of the social hothouses. If Mrs. Miller will do a novel in which most of the men and most of the women are "people"—regular people or irregular people, great or

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small, does not matter; but they must be people—we in America will be the first to acclaim her.

Of Mrs. Miller herself there are only a few brief facts to be stated. This tall and charming woman was born in New York in 1874, the daughter of James G. K. Duer and Elizabeth (Meads) Duer. She was graduated from Barnard College, Columbia University, in 1899. She was married to Henry Wise Miller of New York on October 5, 1899. Her New York home on the upper East Side of the city, just below Central Park and just off Fifth Avenue, is in the most fashionable residence section, is in the heart of that region where most of her characters unquestionably live and where most of the others aspire to.

BOOKS BY ALICE DUER MILLER

The Modern Obstacle, 1903.
Calderon's Prisoner, 1904.
Less Than Kin, 1909.
Blue Arch, 1910.
Are Women People? 1915.
Come Out of the Kitchen, 1916.
Ladies Must Live, 1917.
The Happiest Time of Their Lives, 1918.
Wings in the Night, 1918. Poems.

Published by the Century Company, New York.

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CHAPTER XXIX

ELEANOR HALLOWELL ABBOTT

ELEANOR HALLOWELL ABBOTT (Eleanor Hallowell Abbott Coburn: Mrs. Fordyce Coburn) is the most fanciful writer in America to-day. Fanciful, inventive—not imaginative in the large and proper sense of the word imagination. Her method in writing is utterly different from that of any other popular author. She is in this respect as unique as Harold Bell Wright—to whom she bears no resemblance whatever. Wright starts a novel—we hope the reader will pardon this digression—by making an elaborate outline, synopsis, scenario, *not* of the story but of certain moral and ethical ideas, concepts and principles which he wishes to impress upon his readers. Sometimes up to the very last typewritten draft of one of his books the characters are known only by words denoting the things they stand for. Then, at the eleventh hour, Wright strikes out "Greed" and inserts "Obadiah Jackson" and "Manliness" and inserts "David Fanning"—and the copy goes to the printer.

Mrs. Coburn, or Miss Abbott as we may permit ourselves to call her because of her pen name's connotations—Miss Abbott finds a title and then constructs her story. "Her stories are made to revolve

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around the title, rather than an outgrowth of any plot," says a writer in the Boston *Globe,* upon whose article we rely mainly for the facts of this chapter. It is an article with rather too much fluff but it presents the really interesting facts about the author of *Molly Make-Believe* and presents them with point. The writer of it says: "Once a satisfactory title occurs to Miss Abbott, she follows it in exactly the same manner as the detective who is pursuing a clue."

This is perfectly intelligible. *Molly Make-Believe* as a title teems with ideas; so does *The Sick-a-Bed Lady;* so does *The White-Linen Nurse.*

"My characters are always wholly imaginary. I have never yet put a real person in a story. I doubt if I ever shall, for once I begin to weave a tale, imagination has too vivid a hold on me."

Upon this the Boston *Globe* writer remarks, with a great deal of truthfulness:

"She may choose a commonplace subject—a girl, a woman, a road, a husband. . . . Mrs. Coburn immediately succeeds in placing hers in the uncommon category. It is the qualifying adjective that plays a prominent part in making her subjects peculiarly original. She specifies that her heroine is a sick-a-bed lady, her girl is very tired, her thoroughfare is a runaway road, and even the husband in her sanitarium story is a Sunday spouse.

"It is not her nomenclature alone that is unique and attractive. Added to marked creative ability, she has a quality of verbal fitness, and her phrases are charged with amazing intensity and force, so that there is an exhilaration in her pages. Indeed, as one of her

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friends said, after reading *The Kink in the Air,* one about decides that it is the 'kink' in this author's style that is its chiefest charm."

Many scoff; Franklin P. Adams used to divert himself with Eleanor Hallowell Abbottisms; scratching the surface of the ground like an industrious hen you may uncover many choice morsels of wriggling English. But if you think these are all the Eleanor Hallowell Abbott books contain you are as deluded as the hen that thinks she has uncovered earth's deepest secrets. Below, far below, but not buried at such a depth as to be uncoverable by ordinary minds, are veins of pure humor, tenderness; the rich gold of sympathy and friendly fancifulness. They are paying streaks. Pick up a reprinted copy of *Molly Make-Believe* and look at the page in the front which records *over twenty* editions in five years!

We follow the lead of the Boston *Globe* article:

Miss Abbott works slowly and carefully. Her chief concern while writing is with her own feeling about the tale she is at work upon. Unless she comes to like it pretty well she does not send it to a publisher. It must interest her first as some sort of warranty that it will interest others. "Painter, musician, writer—whether anybody else likes your work or not," she says, "doesn't specially matter if you can only bring that work to the point where you like it yourself."

She writes entirely upon the typewriter. Even the first draft is composed on a machine. Frequently she spends the entire day at her machine. In writing *The Sick-a-Bed Lady* she devoted twelve hours each day

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for nine days to the task and this, with one exception, is the quickest story-making she has ever accomplished. It is, by any standard, a tremendous bit of work. Three, four, rarely six hours a day is the ordinary day's work of a busy writer. Twelve hours on a stretch can be and is managed once in a great while when circumstances make the work imperative; but it is not managed for more than a day or two and is usually followed by a complete rest, sometimes in bed and with medical attendance! Twelve hours a day for nine days—it will make the hardiest shudder. Many of the best American writers are entirely satisfied if they do 500 or 1,000 words a day—and not every day at that. But as a rule Miss Abbott takes from a month to a year to write in such time as she can dedicate to it a short story, or a long short story, or a short novel. In eight years she wrote some twenty stories. For two years in succession she won a $1,000 prize in *Collier's Weekly* short story contests with *The Very Tired Girl* and *The Sick-a-Bed Lady.*

Before her marriage to Dr. Fordyce Coburn Miss Abbott was secretary and English assistant in the State Normal School at Lowell, Massachusetts. This job kept her at her desk all day and it was in hours when she might have been expected to be asleep or resting or playing that she hunted titles and let her fancy do what it would with them. She used a pen name at first. Her first serious attempts at writing were in verse. Two long poems published in *Harper's Magazine* attracted much attention.

How curiously things go in this world! Miss Abbott had furnished the text and scheme for an adver-

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tising circular sent out by a Boston firm. The circular was so strikingly good that business houses began to come to its originator with offers of advertising contracts. Miss Abbott was for some time in a state of indecision as to whether she should develop her gift for writing advertisements or try to succeed with stories. Finally she sent two tales to two magazines with the mental resolution:

"If these are rejected, I believe I'll take up commercial writing."

But both stories were accepted. Miss Abbott says that she owes her success as a fictioneer, therefore, to *Lippincott's Magazine* and the *Smart Set* quite as much as to anything else.

As readers will have suspected, Miss Abbott is a member of the family which has attained distinction in letters and theology both. She is a daughter of the Rev. Edward Abbott, sometime editor of the *Literary World* of Boston; a niece of Dr. Lyman Abbott, editor of the *Outlook* and Henry Ward Beecher's successor at Plymouth Church, Brooklyn; and a granddaughter of the Jacob Abbott who wrote the Rollo books for boys.

Miss Abbott's father was born in Farmington, Maine, and was graduated from New York University in 1860, seven years after his brother, Lyman Abbott, matriculated at the same institution. Edward Abbott studied theology at the Andover Theological Seminary and served as pastor of the Pilgrim Congregational Church at Cambridge, Massachusetts. From 1869 to 1878 he was editor of the *Congregationalist;* afterward he became editor of the *Literary*

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World. He was ordained a minister of the Episcopal church in 1879 and served as rector of St. James's Church, Cambridge, until 1896. Like his father, Jacob Abbott, Edward Abbott wrote some juvenile books as well as several histories and biographies.

Eleanor Hallowell Abbott was born in Cambridge in 1872. Largely educated by private tutors, she was for a short time a student in the public schools and afterward a special student at Radcliffe. She was a child exceedingly fond of outdoor life. Although she remembers kind and patient teachers she can recall no day when the walls of a schoolroom did not fret and torment her with the sense of physical confinement.

"The one or two things I understood at all I learned so quickly that it drove me almost crazy waiting for the fifty or more classmates to catch up—and the great many things I didn't understand I was too frightened to learn in such a crowd. I can't look upon little, playful, day-dreaming, high-strung children shut up in an ironbound schoolroom without experiencing a very large lump in my throat."

At the Harvard grammar school in Cambridge her teachers first discovered the Abbott talent in her surprising fondness for English composition, a subject not customarily dear to the hearts of schoolchildren, and in her rapturous delight in reading aloud Washington Irving's *Sketch Book.*

"Certainly," says Miss Abbott, "I never showed any other special signs of intelligence, being always, I remember, at the extreme foot of my class in every subject except English. Surely nothing but my fa-

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ther's unfailing sympathy and understanding sustained either me or my teachers, through the dreadful period of fractions and other mathematical horrors. And it was here at this school that I formed the first intellectual friendship of my life with a little, fair-haired, blue-eyed, earnest-minded boy who is now Professor Thomas Whittemore, of Tufts College. While the other children giggled over ink-dipped pigtails, wrote facetious notes about their teachers, and traded postage stamps, we two were whispering about authors and exchanging autographs and timidly confiding literary ambitions to each other. Funny little people we must have been—astonishingly solemn, inordinately dignified and most deliciously important with all the grave, childish self-consciousness of having already fixed our minds on higher things.

"I recall one day when we were swapping a Longfellow check-stub for a Whittier post-card, or something of that sort. We got caught at it and were kept ignominiously after school, to the infinite delight of our more frivolous-minded companions."

Miss Abbott's husband, Dr. Fordyce Coburn, is the "silent partner" in her work to whom *Molly Make-Believe* is dedicated. He aids and abets her in her stories, in taking a course in playwriting at Harvard under Professor George Baker, in anything she wants to do. Dr. Coburn is medical adviser of the Lowell high school and an all-round athlete and sportsman whenever a city practice will release him sufficiently. He and Mrs. Coburn spend their spare time salmon fishing in Maine, playing tennis at Lowell, coon and wild turkey hunting on the edge of the Florida ever-

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glades—doing anything, in fact, that two persons, husband and wife, great comrades and possessing similar tastes, can always find to do happily together.

BOOKS BY ELEANOR HALLOWELL ABBOTT

Molly Make-Believe, 1910.
The Sick-a-Bed Lady, 1911.
The White-Linen Nurse, 1913.
The Indiscreet Letter, 1915.
Little Eve Edgarton, 1915.
The Stingy Receiver, 1917.

Published by the Century Company, New York.

The Ne'er-Do-Much, 1918.

Published by Dodd, Mead & Company, New York.

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CHAPTER XXX

HARRIET T. COMSTOCK

THE significant thing about Harriet T. Comstock has been her rôle in reprint.

After a novel has met the demand for it in the regular edition the plates from which it is printed are turned over to Grosset & Dunlap or some other publishing house which issues popular books in inexpensive form. The show has left Broadway to go on "the road." And, you might not think it, but sometimes the worth of a show is never known until it hits "the road."

The worth of Mrs. Comstock was never known until *Joyce of the North Woods* went into reprint.

The book, at over a dollar, had had a "good, average sale"—is 10,000 copies a good average sale? Reader, it is. Think not that all novels are best sellers. That's no more the case than that all the sellers are the best novels.

Joyce went into reprint and in three months sold 60,000 copies and then it sold and sold and sold; and so, when they came to be reprinted, did *Janet of the Dunes* and *A Son of the Hills*. In a little more than three years these three novels in reprint went to 250,000 copies. Since then *The Place Beyond the Winds* and later books have been put out by the reprinters. Is

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there any question of Mrs. Comstock's importance? We think not.

But what's the explanation? What, in the vernacular, is the answer? The answer is just this: Mrs. Comstock is an earnest, sincere, enthusiastic writer; she is an educated woman, a suffragist, with experience in public speaking and a familiarity with public affairs; she is a homemaker who has always made the keeping of a pleasant home in Flatbush, Brooklyn, her chief business and who wrote at first just for fun and as she had the chance; she has convictions and no more hesitates to act upon them than to express them; she is personally modest—you have to dig things out of her about herself. But—is this the answer? Is there something else?

Yes, there is this else. Mrs. Comstock has worked with intensive culture and a visible reward the peculiarly modern literary field known (it really isn't so known but it will be) as idealism.

What's that? There are realists and romanticists although no two of us agree as to what makes a literary realist, what a romanticist. Yet we all recognize the distinction. It is a sure if shadowy boundary. But a literary idealist?

The literary idealist is the product of everybody's dissatisfaction with what the other two give us. Vexed with the clash of the allopath and the homeopath, some send for the osteopath. The figure of speech we employ is no offhand metaphor. Literary idealists like Mrs. Comstock are a kind of literary osteopaths. They go at us vigorously. They decline to dose us with the nauseous compounds of realism

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and they shudder at the thought of our taking sugar pellets of romance. What they want us to do is to let them rub, thump, pound and flex us—mentally and emotionally, of course. They say: "Now, see here! Your intellect and your emotions may not be very wonderful but they are your own. Exercise them! Rely on them! Keep well and happy by using them to the fullest extent! They are what the Lord gave you. Don't try to refine them till they become flabby. Don't use them brutally till they go to pieces. Recognize your limitations and you'll be all right!"

That's Mrs. Comstock's secret, whether she would put it that way herself or not. She is not a "great" novelist in the usual acceptation of the word; she is, in respect of literary distinction, not even a good novelist. Aesthetically considered she is nowhere. Practically considered she is in a hundred thousand homes, entertaining people, instructing people, osteopathizing, making them use the brains and feelings they have, preventing them from aping something they have not and cannot acquire, killing snobbery at the roots, arresting the blight of disillusionment and convincing young and old that certain simple, fundamental instincts and certain simple, fundamental principles of character are what count—with *them.* She is right, they do.

Conviction about the truth of life, conviction as to the best use of the novel, namely, "to present the great truths of life in an attractive manner, where they will reach the greatest number of people"—this sums up Harriet T. Comstock. How did she come to write *The Place Beyond the Winds* which presents the ques-

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tion of eugenics and the ethics of silence on certain matters affecting marriage? Mrs. Comstock's face saddens and she tells you:

"I had a most unpleasant experience once. I happened to learn that the very attractive son of a dear friend of mine was totally unfit to marry the girl to whom he was engaged. I approached the young man, but found him obdurate; so, after a long mental and spiritual struggle, I revealed the facts to the girl's mother.

"It was the most trying experience of my life. Then the feeling came to me that I must write about it—must do my small part toward banishing the evil."

Exactly! There you have the idealist in action as well as in literature. It is perfectly plain what some people will think of Mrs. Comstock's course; it is equally plain that hundreds of thousands will approve it. Do her the fine justice to acknowledge that whatever any one thought of it, that even if every one else in the world condemned her, she would have done as she did.

She has, in a showdown, absolute and unlimited courage. Then and then only is her rooted modesty and her equally rooted humor put aside. As for the humor that is hers, it comes out fully in the narrative of her experiences campaigning for suffrage. As she once wrote:

"And then the anti who became converted and in a burst of gratitude sent me a bottle of Benedictine!

"Maybe she felt as the young girl at a revival once felt who electrified the congregation by shouting:

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" 'Good Lord! My jewelry is dragging me down to hell—I am going to give it to my sister!' "

Go out to Flatbush, as Alice Lawton did one sunshiny afternoon, afterward relating her experience in the *Book News Monthly;* travel along a "broad, tree-shaded street between rows of real homes with full complement of flower gardens and babies and puppies; stop at a pretty, wide-verandaed, white-pillared house and call upon Mrs. Comstock, wife, mother, home-maker, novelist—a Jill of many trades and successful at them all!"

She seats you in a "cozy, brown-walled drawing-room, beside a little round table." You eat "piping hot buttered toast and crisp jumbles, and drink properly-brewed tea. Sonny comes strolling in, a large, beautifully-marked Burne-Jonesy yellow cat," a Persian. The creature is polite but heads for a little mahogany desk and sniffs at the single drawer. It contains his catnip.

The hostess is the sort of woman you make confidences to. Mrs. Comstock is cheerful, "has smiling eyes, a loving-toned voice, curly gray hair, wears pretty clothes and almost always flowers. One feels a hearty welcome even when one telephones her. She never sounds annoyed, nor even interrupted."

Upstairs there's a bright little room where she works. Couch in one corner, built-in bookcase in another, big desk in the middle. The desk is heaped with piles of closely-written paper and books. On the soft buff paper of the walls are paintings, drawings, photographs—the originals of illustrations to Mrs. Comstock's books are noticeable. Here she writes

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most of each novel, subjected to endless interruptions —friends and neighbors of a novelist never take the novelist's work seriously. When the finishing chapters are to be done Mrs. Comstock packs manuscript, pencils and paper and goes away. Her publishers and her husband have the address—no one else. She is one of the extremely few novelists who do not use a typewriter—she writes it all out longhand and makes several copies before she gets through. She began by writing stories for the school paper, she continued by writing children's stories, then books for older girls and boys. *Janet of the Dunes* was her first novel.

Thomas Hardy is her favorite author. "Whenever I feel that I am stranded I read Hardy and regain my poise. He discusses so clearly and nobly the problems with which we are struggling to-day. And I also like Barrie; principally, I think, because he knows women so thoroughly, and I always know he knows. Stevenson once said of George Eliot that when she wrote of men they always put their hands up to feel if their hair is coming down; but Barrie writes of women without their appearing with a cigar in their hands."

Of her method of work Mrs. Comstock says:

"The first thing I see is the place and the people—the background and the actors. Then their story begins to unfold in my mind. When the time comes that that story must be written before I can have any peace of mind, I sit down to it—not before. Other writers, I understand, usually see the story or the people first, and the background later. With me, the background, the environment of my characters, is

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all-important. Why, I even keep a set of pictures of the country I am writing of on my desk beside me."

Mrs. Comstock always goes to the scene of her stories. Her backgrounds are always of actual places and her people are frequently real people. Thus in *Joyce of the North Woods* her St. Ange is a place in northern New York and all the lesser characters are taken from life. In *The Vindication,* Dr. Hill is straight out of actuality. On a suffrage tour Mrs. Comstock met this young physician whose work had been so largely among the Adirondack poor. He, too, had adopted a backward and neglected child, just as Dr. Hill takes hold of the boy Chester in Mrs. Comstock's novel. *A Son of the Hills* was the fruit of a visit in the Virginia mountains. Not the immediate fruit; some time had to elapse before Mrs. Comstock could "see" the story in the mountaineers. In *Mam'selle Jo,* Mrs. Comstock has gone up North again, to the St. Lawrence country, and she tells the moving story of a woman of 40 who has at last struggled clear of debt and is at last able to gratify the instinct of mother-love which is in her.

Popular she is, but she does not think of popularity. In truth a writer cannot. For, as Mrs. Comstock says, the writer who thinks of the possible popularity of her work when she should be thinking of her story will impair her work. And her work is the thing with Mrs. Comstock. Reject it if you like, accept it if you will; she will go unshakeably on. She has something to do and is about doing it.

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Books by Harriet T. Comstock

Janet of the Dunes, 1908.
Joyce of the North Woods, 1911.
A Son of the Hills, 1913.
The Place Beyond the Winds, 1914.
The Vindication, 1917.
Mam'selle Jo: A Novel of the St. Lawrence Country, 1918.
(Also many books for boys and girls.)

Mrs. Comstock's earlier books are to be had in reprint. Janet of the Dunes was published by Little, Brown & Company, Boston; the others are published by Doubleday, Page & Company, New York.

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CHAPTER XXXI

HONORÉ WILLSIE

NOTHING is so satisfactory to write about as a novelist with ideas; but in writing about Mrs. Honoré Willsie we shall not discuss her ideas. It will be enough to try faithfully to set them before her thousands of readers and the thousands who ought to be her readers, to try to picture Mrs. Willsie herself. That is all that can be done in a chapter of reasonable length. To discuss intelligently Mrs. Willsie's ideas would require a book and an amount of exact knowledge on certain subjects—immigration and Americanization, for example—that is no part of our reporter's equipment. A straightaway bit of exposition must do instead.

The spring of 1919 will see the publication of a new novel by Mrs. Willsie, *The Forbidden Trail,* an exciting story of the *Still Jim* country, Arizona and the irrigable West. The novel deals with the clever efforts of German spies and sympathizers to appropriate for Germany the discoveries and improvements made by the sturdy Americans of our United States Reclamation Service. This theme is not so completely derived from the war as might appear at first glance. Readers of *Still Jim* will recall in the closing chapters the visit of Herr Gluck to the Cabillo dam and his

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effort to get Jim Manning to enter the service of the German Government—in a legitimate way, however. Of the illegitimate ways in which Germany was then working among American engineers Mrs. Willsie is now free to speak and may be trusted to speak out of an exact knowledge. For her husband, Henry Elmer Willsie, of New York, was an inventor and consulting engineer when she was married to him and with him she spent two years in the deserts of Arizona.

Honoré Willsie was born in Ottumwa, Iowa, the daughter of William Dunbar McCue and Lilly Bryant (Head) McCue and a descendant of old New Englanders who went West, the people who form the important background of *Still Jim* and *Lydia of the Pines*. She is a Bachelor of Arts of the University of Wisconsin and was married soon after her graduation. The two years in the West followed and then the husband and wife came to New York where Mrs. Willsie devoted herself to the task of winning recognition as a writer. She says now:

"A plan, and always keeping your eye on what you want to be doing in three years or in five years—that is what makes for success for a writer.

"I came to New York with the intention of being a writer. I did not want to work on a magazine or a newspaper. And I wanted to write what I wanted to write.

"I had sold Bob Davis [Robert H. Davis, editor of *Munsey's Magazine*] a little love story called *Beatrice and the Rose*. So after a few weeks in New York I went to see him with a bundle of stories I

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wanted him to buy. He looked them over and shook his head.

"'Do me something else like *Beatrice and the Rose* and I'll take it,' he said.

"'I don't want to go on writing stuff like that,' I explained. 'If that's the best I can do I'll give up writing altogether.'

"'But nobody wants to read about those deserts and glowing sunsets. There is only one man in New York who will read about deserts—Theodore Dreiser.'

"'All right,' I decided. 'I will go to see Theodore Dreiser.'

"I sent my stuff to Mr. Dreiser in advance and next day I went down to see what he thought of it. I was pretty well scared. I walked around the Butterick Building—four times I walked around that bulky flat-iron before I screwed up enough courage to go in. When I finally got inside and was ushered into Mr. Dreiser's office [the novelist was then editor of the *Delineator,* a job Mrs. Willsie now holds] I was tongue-tied with nervousness. That nervousness might well have been prophetic. The interview turned out to be a momentous one for me.

"'My God!' said Mr. Dreiser, looking me over. 'Another infant come to New York to reform it.' But after a little talk he offered me a job, editorial work at a good salary.

"'I'll have to think that over,' I said, the temptation of a good regular salary struggling against my plans for writing, and writing only.

"'No,' Mr. Dreiser ordered. 'You sit right there and decide now.'

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"So I sat there and thought about it and finally I told him that I wouldn't take his job. I had stuck out this far and I guessed I could go on.

" 'All right,' Mr. Dreiser agreed without argument. 'Stick it out at the writing game if you want to. It won't be easy, but you will make good. You will have a hard time at first, and you will need pluck. But in five years you will land and land big. As for these stories of yours, I will buy them.' And he named a sum staggering to my inexperience, though he assured me he was taking advantage of me because I was unknown.

"Well, I kept on writing. I bought a second-hand typewriter and worked it with two fingers and many times I thought of the salary I might have had coming in every week. As Mr. Dreiser said, it wasn't easy. I made $500 that first year. Things came out my way because I stuck to my plan and always kept my eye on the future—and had the courage to refuse that job."

Not long afterward Mrs. Willsie's stories began to appear in the magazines and were unusually popular. She took up the writing of special articles for such periodicals as *Harper's Weekly* and *Collier's* on important subjects—immigration, divorce, Indians, the United States Reclamation Service. Norman Hapgood, who was then editor of *Harper's Weekly,* said of her work: "She has the ability to get at the essentials of a big question, and put it in simple, human terms."

Mrs. Willsie's first published novel was *The Heart of the Desert,* which came out in 1913. It won imme-

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diate recognition for her. Richard Le Gallienne, writing an appreciation of Mrs. Willsie in the *Book News Monthly* of March, 1917, said:

"As a boy, of course, I adored the American Indian of Fenimore Cooper, but, since then, words fail. If I have a bête noire in fiction, nowadays, it is the American Indian. I mention this purely personal peculiarity, merely to emphasize the delight which I took in Mrs. Willsie's hero in *The Heart of the Desert*—and his truly heroic wooing and winning of a white girl, with Mrs. Willsie's, and, I am sure, all her readers' concurrence. Never was such a masterful wooing, or one brought to winning through such heart-beating suspense, such a grim passionate race for love and life in so wild and star-lit and infinite a setting."

And he says that therefore "when I say that, in my opinion, *The Heart of the Desert* is one of the best 'yarns,' and, if I may say so, one of the most virile love stories written in our time, it is not from any prejudice in favor of its subject matter."

Mr. Le Gallienne's article is not long. We take the liberty to quote the rest of it from a booklet on Mrs. Willsie prepared by the Frederick A. Stokes Company, her publishers. This booklet also contains an interesting article by Hildegarde Hawthorne on Mrs. Willsie and her novels. Says Mr. Le Gallienne:

"My first acquaintance with Mrs. Honoré Willsie's books came through a photograph of her looks. The photograph, or photographs, to which I have reference occurred in a copy of *Harper's Weekly,* not so very long before that honored periodical was gath-

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ered to its fathers. They were taken by her husband, and represented Mrs. Willsie in the heart of the Arizona Desert; dizzily seated at the edge of a canyon; in camp democratically at dinner, with a stunning hat and a still more stunning smile, and so on. Here, one said, was the veritable 'Girl of the Golden West,' tall and fearless-eyed as Artemis; something like a symbolic figure of that noble type of Western woman, which accounts so largely for the proverbial chivalry —and homicides—of that portion of America which is at once most romantic and most real. One of these, particularly, haunted me, and with my subsequent acquaintance with Mrs. Willsie's writings in mind, I must be forgiven one more use of the word 'symbolic' —Mrs. Willsie is seated in the foreground, a wilderness of sagebrush all about her, and a lonely stretch of barren mountain in the near background. Her head, of which you only see the massive coiled hair, is bent in an attitude, as of sorrow, close over her knees, from which her right hand hangs listlessly, almost touching the cowboy hat at her feet. 'The close of a long day,' is the caption of the picture. In the light of Mrs. Willsie's books, that photograph has come to me to represent the attitude of her soul, the soul of a young American woman, to whom the idealism that made her country is a religion, in one of those moods of dejection which occasionally overcome all of us who love this great Republic, at what too frequently seems like an eclipse, or even a decadence, of that idealism. As she sits there with bended head, like some heroic weeper, in that austere wilderness, her attitude seems to be saying what Lydia says so

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finally in her inspiring new book, *Lydia of the Pines:*

" 'We've got too many lawyers in America. What I think America needs is real love of America. And it seems to me the best way to get it is to identify oneself with the actual soil of the community. What I want is this: That you and I, upon the ground where poor John Levine did such wrongs, will build us a home. I don't mean a home as Americans usually mean the word, I mean we'll try to found a family there. We'll send the roots of our roof-tree so deep into the ground that for generations to come our children's children will be found there and our family name will stand for old American ideals in the community. I don't see how else we Americans can make up to the world for the way we've exploited America.'

"After looking at Mr. Willsie's photographs, I chanced to be walking along Fifth Avenue, and glancing into a bookseller's windows, I beheld one of those pyramidal displays of a new book which I have sometimes thought must have exhausted the whole edition. The name of the book was *Still Jim.* It was by the lady of Mr. Willsie's beautiful photographs—and it was a real best seller, said the bookseller, to whom I disbursed the needed dollar and whatever it was. No young writer could hope to live up to Mr. Willsie's photographs, but I was happily astonished to find how near Mrs. Willsie came to doing it. Apart from the book as a story, its quality of atmosphere, its breath of vast spaces, its sense of heroic action on a great stage, were remarkable. There was, too, that background of 'character' to the writing in which the

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life of a book mainly resides, and for lack of which so many clever books come and go, perishing like the summer skies.

"*Lydia of the Pines* [we have already quoted Mr. Le Gallienne's words on *The Heart of the Desert*] combines all Mrs. Willsie's qualities and characteristics in a maturing ratio. The book shows her as growing nearer and nearer to that symbolic photograph of her. More and more she is seen as the passionate dreamer of the true American ideal, a practical dreamer, too, not afraid to arraign America to her face for wrong done in the past, and wrongs still a-doing. The theme of *Lydia of the Pines* is one of the noblest she could have chosen—the infamy of political corruption that is so subtly and cruelly doing the last wrong to the Indian by the legalized theft of his pitiful 'reservations.'

" 'Where the pine-forest is destroyed, the pines never come again,'—such is the burden of this noble and very moving story of a high-souled but most human girl, whose family and friends are implicated in 'real estate' deals with Indians of a nearby reservation. It is a simple story too, moving among simple lives, in a simple Western milieu which Mrs. Willsie presents with great fidelity, with many touches of humor and pathos.

"In *Lydia of the Pines* one sees Mrs. Willsie growing in strength, more surely becoming one of the authentic voices of the nobler Americanism, and her book is sure of a huge welcome by those who have that at heart."

With equal enthusiasm Hildegarde Hawthorne de-

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clares that *Lydia of the Pines* "is the best thing Mrs. Willsie has yet done." The author of this volume has endeavored generally to be reticent in the expression of personal preferences. He will only say that he does not agree with Miss Hawthorne about *Lydia*. He found it fearfully dull while fully conceding the interest of the ideas which Mrs. Willsie never fails to present for her readers' contemplation. He admired the portrait of John Levine but deplored what he felt to be its lack of solidity. The reader sees Levine in two relations only—to Lydia and to the Indians, and unfortunately his relations to the Indians are mostly a matter of hearsay, what came to Lydia's ears, no more. To this writer *Still Jim* seems by far the better book.

But Miss Hawthorne is thoroughly right when she says:

"No one who reads Mrs. Willsie's books can fail to be deeply interested in seeing how the writer grasps and lays before her public certain big problems confronting us, such as this of the downfall of the early traditions, the influx of races that have not our conception of government or of life, and now the Indian problem. In *Lydia of the Pines* the shameful story of our treatment of the red man is illuminatingly told. It is told with measure and good sense, and is concretely pictured, the facts concerning one Reservation supplying the material. Those who wish to ascertain how closely Mrs. Willsie sticks to facts need only hunt up the reports of the Board of Indian Commissioners in regard to the White Earth Reservation in Minnesota to find out. The whole story is there, told

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over and over again with endless, pitiful detail. In her novel Mrs. Willsie has drawn intelligently upon that mass of testimony, handled it with a full realization of its drama, and also with a peculiarly broad understanding of both sides."

Gertrude Atherton says: "I think *Lydia of the Pines* is an American classic." Margaret Deland wrote to Mrs. Willsie concerning *Still Jim:*

"All the book is American to the roots—but big Jim is the American soul. It is too massive a book to write about in detail;—it's the whole effect that moves me: truth, beauty and democracy. A fine piece of work—an honest heart behind it. I congratulate you."

The element of mysticism in Mrs. Willsie finds its outlet in the two and three line reveries which she puts at the head of her chapters. Thus in *Still Jim* a desert rock muses:

"Humans constantly shift sand and rock from place to place. They call this work. I have seen time return their every work to the form in which it was created."

"Coyotes hunt weaker things. Humans hunt all things, even each other, which the coyote will not do."

In *Lydia of the Pines* it is a pine tree which murmurs:

"The young pine knows the secrets of the ground. The old pine knows the stars."

"Nature is neither cruel nor sad. She is only purposeful, tending to an end we cannot see."

There should be mention of Mrs. Willsie's most recent book, *Benefits Forgot: A Study of Lincoln and*

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Mother Love. This is a brief but true story of a young army surgeon for whose education his mother had made great sacrifices. Mrs. Willsie tells how President Lincoln learned of the young man's neglect of his mother and brought him to realize his ingratitude. It is a very fine and very touching little story.

Has the war changed Mrs. Willsie's ideas and ideals? No, it has sustained and strengthened them; it has supplied her with evidence in their support and justification in their advancement. We quote an interview with the novelist by Maxwell Aley:

"War time (Mrs. Willsie said) is woman's time to show the stuff she is made of. This war is going to take the 'fluff' out of feminism in America just as it did in England. It's"—hesitation and a twinkling eye—"it's going to blow the foam off the feminist beer! [A good figure, that, for feminism has certainly been something yeasty, something brewing, and with a little hop in it!] "I hope the war is going to make American women realize the importance of being women, and the chance that it gives them to mold the coming generation.

"As I see it there are two things American women can do—one abstract and one concrete. They can teach children in this time of national stress what it means to be Americans, and in that way form the Americans of the future; and they can mobilize their resources and offer them to the government. Like all abstract things, the first is the more difficult.

"Women have got to get down from pink teas to brass tacks! If the average woman would only stop

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to realize just how important it is to be a woman! Why, woman's business is not only the bringing into the world of the coming generation, but the molding of that generation's ideals. American men are too busy making a living to give much time to the children—it's the women who teach them at home and at school. And they ought to be taught what it means to be Americans as well as being taught religion and morals, or grammar and geography.

"But here's the rub! To teach children that, a woman has got to realize what it means herself. How many do?

"I hope more women realize it than men—that is, than the men I've asked. Several years ago I started out asking all sorts of men 'What is an American?' I asked 'Bohunks' and 'Guineas' at work on street construction, I asked American men in every walk in life—and what do you suppose I got as an average answer? That an American was a man who knew how to get rich quick!

"This war has shown us that taking out naturalization papers, or even being born here, doesn't necessarily make an American. We've found out that the melting pot doesn't always melt. To be an American you must have a certain philosophy of government, and only a thoughtful person can have a philosophy at all. If you are going to be a true American, you've got to think things out! You've got to come to an understanding of the big ideals on which the men who founded this country built.

"Every American who does that develops a paradox. He finds first that he has a sense of freedom

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and equality, and then he arrives at a feeling of responsibility. That latter feeling has been very evident among thinking Americans since the beginning of the European war, and it is particularly evident now.

"It's up to American women, then, to think out what it means to be Americans before they attempt to teach their children—or some one else's children—what it means. I wish that we might have an American litany—a national creed that mothers and teachers could give to our children! I wish that every American child might be brought to understand the state of mind of the men who wrote and signed our Declaration of Independence—a state of mind compounded of utter bravery, the spirit of self-sacrifice, and a devotion to cause and country that made them literally offer up their 'lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor.'

"Now do you see why I said the abstract thing women have a chance to do is the hard thing? But if it is the more difficult, I believe it is also the more important.

"As for the concrete thing, that is already being done to a certain extent. Women have begun offering their services to the government through their various organizations, but they ought to do it more completely. If we are to have universal service for men, we ought to have a variety of universal service for women—at least a mobilization of the resources of all the women in the country. I believe that women here in America will get the vote out of this war as women are getting it in England, but American women will have to show,

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as English women have done, that they are worthy of the vote.

"And there is one thing American women must not forget—that the most important thing they can mobilize is their sex. When the men of a country give their bodies to the sword, the women must give theirs to the future—to the generation to come. Now, more than in peace times, women owe it to their country to bear children, and bear them intelligently. And when they have borne them, it is their sacred duty to bring them up Americans in a full understanding of the ideals on which our fathers built the nation."

Living in New York, writing in New York, working in New York as the managing editor of the *Delineator,* Mrs. Willsie is still and essentially the woman of Mr. Willsie's photographs which made so forcible an impression on Mr. Le Gallienne. With her is always a splendid vision: "Exquisite violet mists rolled back toward the mountains. The pungent odor of sagebrush floated through the tent. Iridescent, bejeweled, flashing every rainbow tint from its moistened breast, the desert smiled at us. Once more I yielded to its loveliness." To her and her vision many, many of her countrymen and countrywomen will always yield gratefully and with pleasure.

BOOKS BY HONORÉ WILLSIE

The Heart of the Desert, 1913.
Still Jim, 1915.
Lydia of the Pines, 1917.

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Benefits Forgot, 1917.
The Forbidden Trail, 1919.

Published by Frederick A. Stokes Company, New York.

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CHAPTER XXXII

FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT

HALF a dozen plays and half a hundred stories stand to the credit of Frances Hodgson Burnett, born in Manchester, England, naturalized as an American citizen in 1905 or thereabouts, the author of *Little Lord Fauntleroy,* most famous of children's stories by a living writer. Mrs. Burnett is a novelist, as such books as *The Shuttle* and *T. Tembaron* attest. She is thought of half or more than half the time as a writer of tales for youngsters, and rightly. Of these she has produced a great number and their success is amazing. No beating of drums, no blasts on trumpets, even toy trumpets: yet as the publishers assure you, in respect of even her less known "juveniles," they keep on selling, year after year, with the most relentless endurance. They don't have to be advertised. In the famous sentiment of a famous advertisement, they are advertised by their loving friends.

The best thing for the adult to do, after paying his tribute to *Fauntleroy,* is to read *The Shuttle,* "a novel of international marriage." It represents Mrs. Burnett's life. She alone of all the writers of our day could have written such a book, declares a friend whose desire to remain anonymous is here observed.

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He supplies a sketch of Mrs. Burnett which had better be reproduced verbatim:

"She is English of the English by birth and temperament; born in Manchester, as you know, where she lived until she was about thirteen. Then, her father having failed in business, owing to the war in America—his failure had something to do with the blockading of the Southern ports, I believe—and he having died, the business went to ruin, although Mrs. Burnett's mother tried her gentle best to save it. There was a large family of them, and Frances, who had already developed the faculty of story-telling, was the life and spirit of the crowd.

"An older brother had gone to join an uncle in Tennessee, and when the family's fortunes were at lowest ebb he advised them to join him in America, which they did, and lived in the greatest poverty on the outskirts of Knoxville. They were so poor that when some one suggested that Frances write out one of her stories and send it to *Godey's Lady's Book* the money for the stamps had to be earned by picking blackberries.

"The first story was accepted and all subsequent stories sent. Then Mrs. Burnett graduated to *Peterson's Magazine.* The Petersons were great friends of Mrs. Burnett in her early days. They recommended that she send some of her stories to the *Century,* which she did, but the quality of them was so English that the *Century* editors suspected they were not original but copied by the little Tennessee girl from stories in English magazines. When her second story was sent to them, they gave expression to their

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doubt. The thing was explained to them, and the publication of the stories—I believe the first was *Surly Tim's Troubles*—was made immediately.

"Mrs. Burnett has always kept in touch with England and English life. As soon as she had made her success, in fact, just after the publication of *That Lass o' Lowrie's,* she went back to England, and has spent some part of nearly every year in England since then. She has lived in all sections of England and has had houses in London; one at 63 Portland Place, and another in Charles Street, Mayfair. She has had country homes in Norfolk, Kent and Surrey. For nearly fifteen years she leased a very interesting old house in Kent, Maytham Hall, really the manor house of a very ancient estate. The house stands in the most wonderful of Kentish gardens, which Mrs. Burnett, with her enthusiasm for gardening, made even more beautiful than they were when she took them.

"Maytham Hall was the homestead of an ancient family of Moneypenneys. On the corner of the Hall grounds stands an ancient Norman church—the church of the Hundred of Rolvenden which is mentioned in the Domesday Book. All the Moneypenneys are buried in this church, which, in its simple way, is of remarkable beauty. Their tombstones surround the great Hall pew, which is almost as big as a room, and has tables and chairs in it. The Hall grounds stand between two very picturesque villages, both appanages of the estate, one called Rolvenden Village and the other Rolvenden Street. They are as picturesque as they can be, full of the quaint old gaffers and gammers.

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"As to the American side of Mrs. Burnett, she has lived over here in touch with the most characteristically and the most broadly American society in Washington and later in New York and its vicinity. As a young girl she saw a good deal of New York life and it was during that time, I imagine, that she got the impressions that produced the earlier part of *The Shuttle*. Her saying that she was 'English by birth and American by the birth of her two sons' I have always thought an amusing expression of her case. In describing Bettina to me, once, she said that Bettina was a woman's version of the cleverness and sense of values that the first Reuben Vandenpoel expressed. This seems to me to be the underlying quality in Bettina. Her sense of the world of things backed by her balance, her self-control and her typical American practicality."

Mrs. Burnett loathes New York for its noise and dirt. Though she no longer has Maytham Hall with its great terraced lawns and its rose gardens she has a big country place near Manhasset, Long Island, New York, called Plandome. It is within commuting distance of New York but oh, how different!

A comfortable, rambling house is surrounded by gardens for which Mrs. Burnett buys flowers as uncontrollably as a bibliophile buys books. The house faces northwest and has "remarkable glimpses of sunsets." Mrs. Burnett naturally has many children as visitors. For them there is a great doll house, the home of Lady Annabelle, who is larger than many of the youngsters that call on her, and who has a wonderful wardrobe. The big house is full of nests of

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children's toys. It also contains much age-darkened furniture brought over from Maytham Hall, principally oak pieces of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries which Mrs. Burnett has collected. Lady Annabelle's residence, for example, was formerly a bread and cheese cupboard which an antiquarian would tell you was probably made by a skilled woodworker not later than the year 1500.

As if visitors were not enough, in such numbers as are hers, Mrs. Burnett is always "neighborizing." To children who live near by her she read chapters of *The Secret Garden* as they were finished. Now, she is a most skillful reader. A very little girl of the lot sat listening for hours on end. Impressions which flowered in *The Secret Garden* came from Maytham Hall where the rose gardens are surrounded by walls about 900 years old. Peasemarsh, Smallhive, Benenden are the names of towns not far from Maytham Hall and all over the countryside you may encounter, or could not many years back, children wearing red cloaks given them by the Earl of Cranbrook. And what is the secret of *The Secret Garden?* What does all this delightful picturesqueness enclose? Why, an idea, namely, that if a healthful thought be planted in the mind it pushes out unhealthful thoughts; and that if the body be unwell it adjusts itself to the healthful thought and grows well. The secret garden which, with its roses, surrounds the characters of the story, plants in their minds all sorts of healthful thoughts. Mrs. Burnett is not metaphysical, however. "Her roses, she declares, are always sincere and endlessly instructive."

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She has suffered much from people who have interviewed her and have not understood her, departing to write what they wanted her to say. She has a philosophy but it is written in her books, definitely and decidedly. It has no other existence and it cannot be separated from the tales which are its embodiment. It is a peculiar characteristic of hers that the moment an idea—a "concept" philosophically speaking—formulates itself in her mind *it does so as some part of a story*. Her pleasant persons and places have as definite ideas and theories and beliefs as the most serious thesis but since they never presented themselves abstractly to Mrs. Burnett they are not so conveyed by her. It is really presumptuous, under the circumstances, to endeavor to express them abstractly as we have just done in the case of *The Secret Garden*.

This will seem a hard saying to most of us, who are trained to try to get at the kernel of everything. All modern education is designed to teach men and women to think and express themselves abstractly with ease and freedom and surety. Why? Because since the Greeks certain abstractions and abstract thought and expression generally have been prized as the best and safest and handiest medium of intellectual exchanges. They are the intellectual coinage —a kind of verbal money that obviates the clumsy old methods of barter. But while we are all used to money and would not do without it we have to remember that the majority of mankind still carries on a vast amount of intellectual exchange by barter. You tell me an actual incident or a story you have heard and I tell you what I have experienced or heard. We

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"swap" experiences and knowledge and each benefits by what he gets from the other without so much as drawing a single abstract conclusion or generalization. The method has its disadvantages but lack of interest is not one of them!

Understand this and you understand Mrs. Burnett. She is dealing with you as you would deal with your neighbor. You would not go to your neighbor and say: "It is possible to live too long." You would go and tell him: "John Smith's mother isn't treated decently. Yesterday," etc., and you would relate the actual occurrence. He would nod. And he would tell you something in exchange. And neither of you would generalize about your respective narrations, but each of you would take the lesson in them well to heart. That is the way of the world and of neighbors. It is Mrs. Burnett's easily comprehended way too.

When she leaves Plandome Mrs. Burnett consents to spend a few days in noisome New York—you can buy things there, after all, and editors and publishers there do congregate—and then she flees to Bermuda. But not until the last cosmos of autumn has perished and gone and every flowerbed at Plandome has been "tucked in a blanket of fertilizer." In Bermuda she—gardens. She imports, in times more favorable than the present, countless roses from England. Her Bermuda cottage is unpretentious but charming.

To revert for a moment to *The Shuttle,* we may note something almost prescient in what Mrs. Burnett said, in 1907, about England and America, in a letter respecting this novel. She somewhat regretted

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the characterization of the book as "a novel of international marriage." That, she argued, was hardly her theme. Of course not. She has no abstract themes. She wrote:

"The subject (of international marriage) is an enormous one, and if I had written all I have been observing for years and all I should have liked to write I should have made a three-volume novel.

"When I say 'the subject' I do not mean merely the international marriage question, but the whole international outlook upon a situation between two great countries such as the history of the world—as far as I know it—has not previously recorded. The wonderfulness of it lies in the fact that two nations which were one, having parted with violence and bitterness, are with a strange sureness being drawn nearer, nearer to each other. That they are of the same blood—the mere fact that they speak the same tongue—makes the thing inevitable in the end.

"I do not mean *The Shuttle* to be merely a story of international marriage, but to suggest a thousand other things. The international marriage must, however, result in being a strong factor, and in the hands of a writer of fiction it must play a prominent part—a leading part, so to speak—because it is the love story, and without it we are lost. For the matter of that, without it 'the shouting and the tumult' would die, 'the captains and the kings depart.'

"Because I am English by birth and American by a sort of adoption, and because I have vibrated between the two continents for years, I have learned to be impersonal and unpartisan. I was neither Amer-

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ican nor English when I told the story. I was merely an intensely interested person who had formed a habit of crossing the Atlantic twice a year.

"There have been disastrous international marriages and there have been successful ones; there is no reason why there should not be international marriages at once dignified and splendid—even history-making. Still, I wish I had had room to add to *The Shuttle* pictures of the thousand other things I find absorbing."

It is not possible to do more than make suggestions as to what books of Mrs. Burnett's a reader should be sure to dip into. No two set of suggestions would be identical, in all likelihood, but grownups can acquire at least a respectable acquaintance with her work by reading *That Lass o' Lowrie's, A Fair Barbarian, Little Lord Fauntleroy, Sara Crewe, The Pretty Sister of José, In Connection With the De Willoughby Claim, The Shuttle, The Dawn of a To-Morrow, The Secret Garden, T. Tembaron* and *Emily Fox-Seton.* No selective list for children is worth making; give them any or all!

Books by Frances Hodgson Burnett

That Lass o' Lowrie's, 1877. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.

Dolly, A Love Story, 1877.

Kathleen, 1877. Hurst.

Surly Tim and Other Stories, 1877. Scribner.

Haworth's, 1879. Scribner.

Louisiana, 1880. Scribner.

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A Fair Barbarian, 1881. Scribner.

Through One Administration, 1883. Scribner.

Little Lord Fauntleroy, 1886. Scribner.

Editha's Burglar. The Page Company, Boston.

Sara Crewe, 1888. Scribner.

Little Saint Elizabeth, 1889.

Two Little Pilgrims' Progress, 1896. Scribner.

The Pretty Sister of José, 1896. Scribner.

A Lady of Quality, 1896. Scribner.

His Grace of Ormonde, 1897. Scribner.

The Captain's Youngest, 1898.

In Connection With the De Willoughby Claim, 1899. Scribner.

The Making of a Marchioness 1901. Frederick A. Stokes Company, New York.

The Methods of Lady Walderhurst. Stokes.

In the Closed Room, 1904. Doubleday, Page & Company, New York.

A Little Princess, 1905. Scribner.

Jarl's Daughter, 1906. Donohue. Given in the United States Catalogue of Books in Print (1912).

Queen Silverbell, 1906. The Century Company, New York. Given in the United States Catalogue of Books in Print (1912).

Racketty-Packetty House, 1906. Century. Given in the United States Catalogue of Books in Print (1912).

Earlier Stories (*Lindsay's Luck,* etc.), 1907. Scribner. Given in the United States Catalogue of Books in Print (1912).

Giovanni and the Other: Children Who Have Made

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Stories, 1907. Scribner. Given in the United States Catalogue of Books in Print (1912).

Emily Fox-Seton (Combining *The Making of a Marchioness* and *The Methods of Lady Walderhurst*). Stokes.

Lindsay's Luck. Hurst. Given in the United States Catalogue of Books in Print (1912).

Miss Crespigny. Donohue. Given in the United States Catalogue of Books in Print (1912).

Piccino and Other Child Stories. Scribner. Given in the United States Catalogue of Books in Print (1912).

Pretty Polly Pemberton. Hurst. Given in the United States Catalogue of Books in Print (1912).

Quiet Life. Donohue. Given in the United States Catalogue of Books in Print (1912).

Theo. Hurst. Given in the United States Catalogue of Books in Print (1912).

Vagabondia. Scribner. Given in the United States Catalogue of Books in Print (1912).

The Shuttle, 1907. Stokes.

The Cozy Lion, 1907. Century.

Good Wolf, 1908. Moffat, Yard & Company, New York.

Spring Cleaning, 1908. Century.

The Dawn of a To-Morrow, 1909. Scribner.

The Secret Garden, 1909. Stokes.

My Robin, 1912. Stokes.

T. Tembaron, 1913. A. L. Burt Company, New York.

Barty Crusoe and His Man Saturday, 1914. Moffat, Yard.

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One I Knew The Best of All, 1915. Scribner.
The Lost Prince, 1915. Burt.
The Land of the Blue Flower, 1916. Moffat, Yard.
The Little Hunchback Zia, 1916. Stokes.
The Way to the House of Santa Claus, 1916. Harper & Brothers, New York.
White People, 1917. Harper.

THE END.

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